AMAR CHITRA KATHA

RIVER STORIES

• GODAVARI • NARMADA • TAMRAPARNI

The route to your roots

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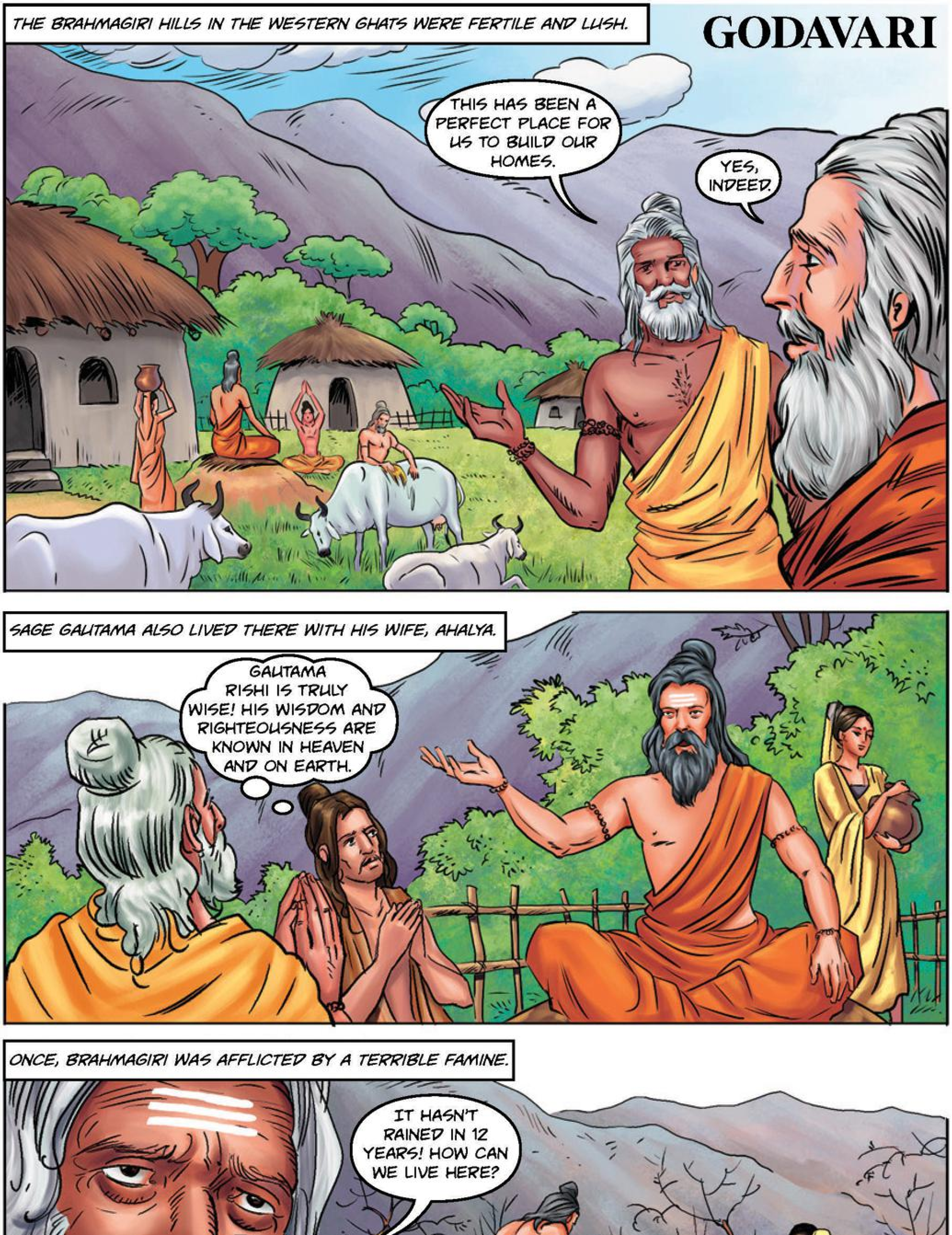
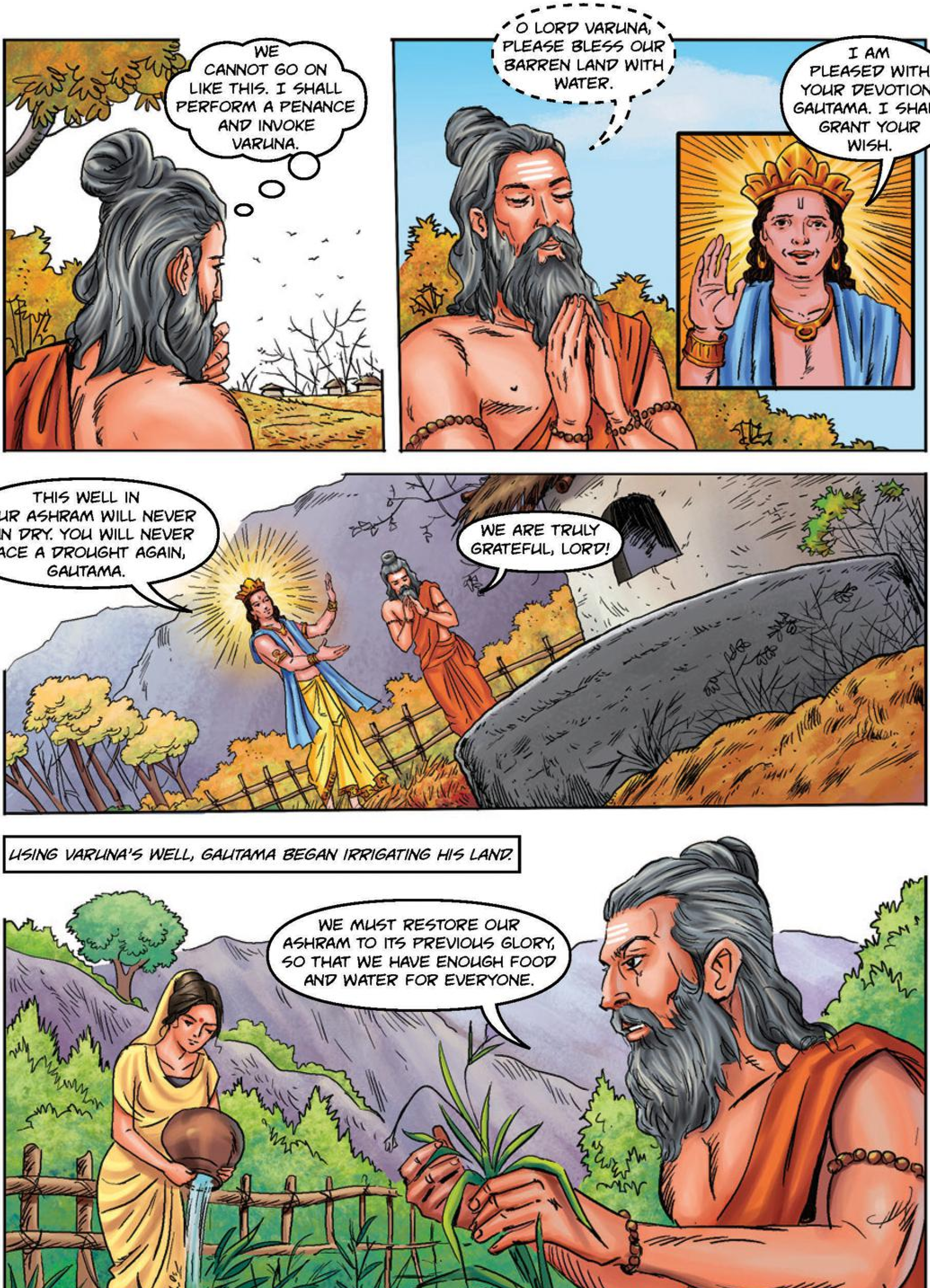
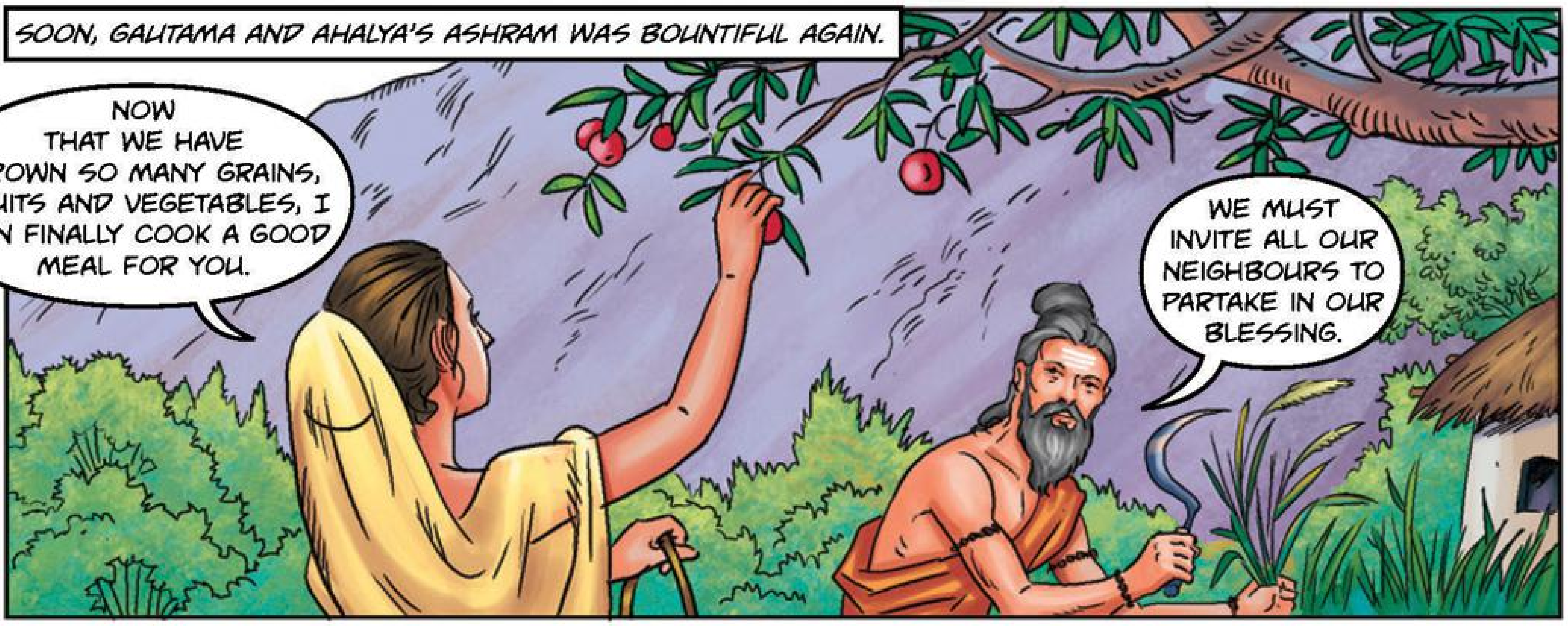
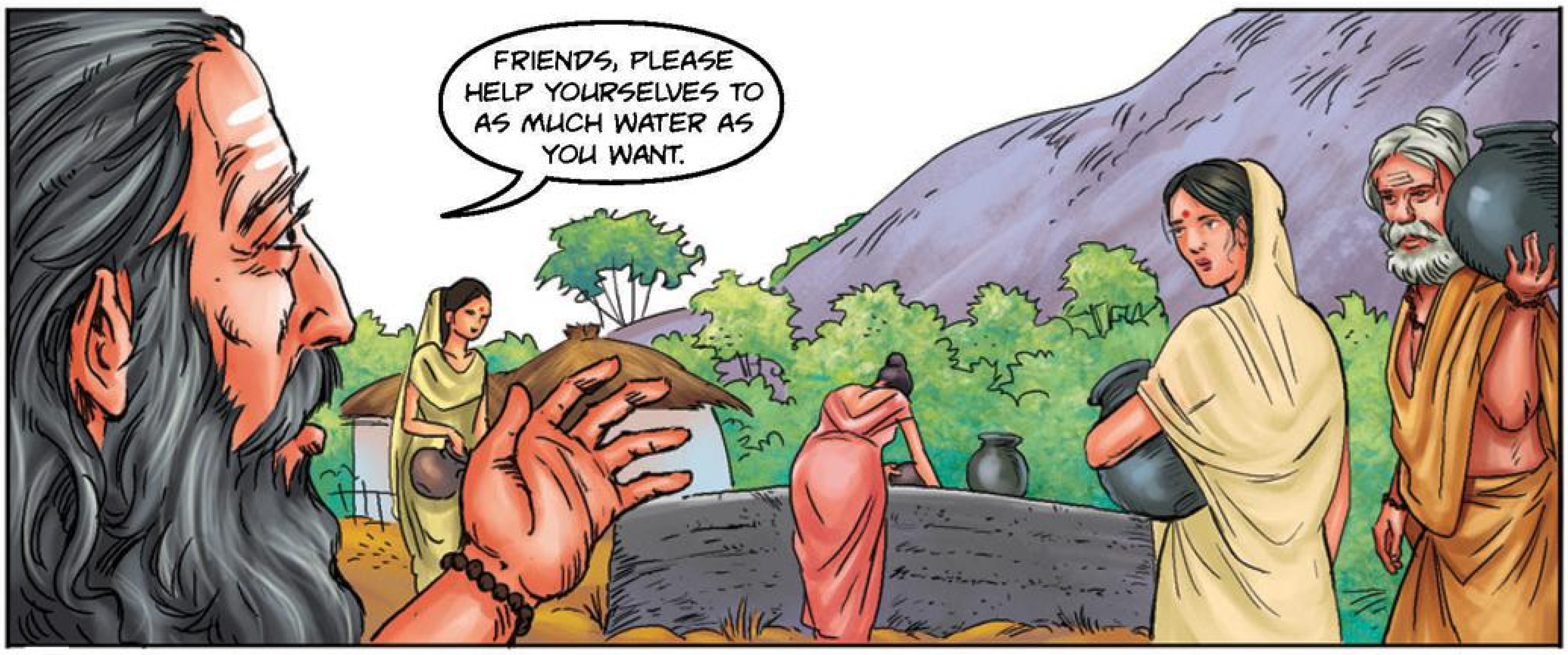
GODAVARI

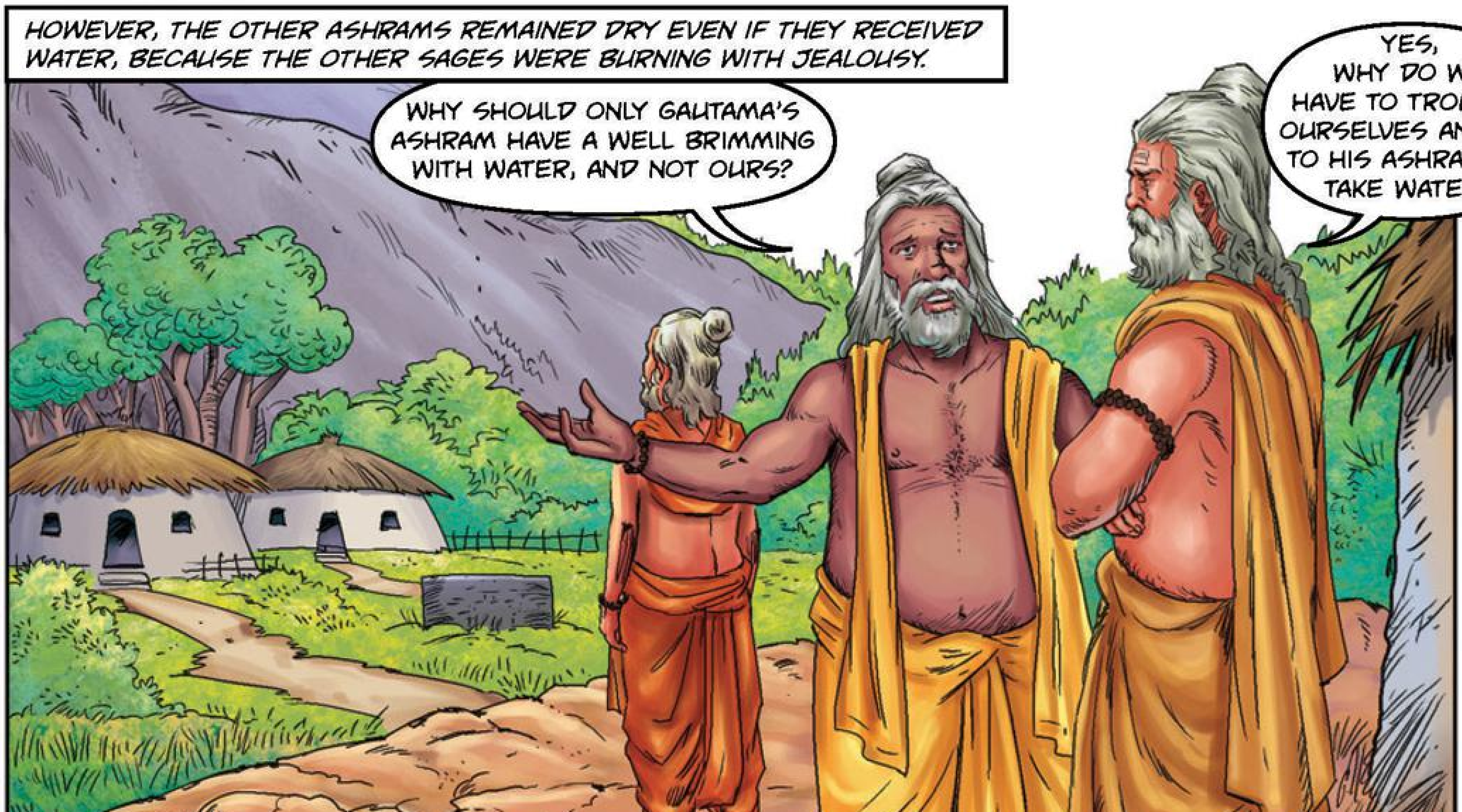

THE BRAHMAGIRI HILLS IN THE WESTERN GHATS WERE FERTILE AND LUSH.
THIS HAS BEEN A PERFECT PLACE FOR US TO BUILD OUR HOMES.
YES, INDEED.
SAGE GAUTAMA ALSO LIVED THERE WITH HIS WIFE, AHALYA.
GAUTAMA RISHI IS TRULY WISE! HIS WISDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE KNOWN IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.
ONCE, BRAHMAGIRI WAS AFFLICTED BY A TERRIBLE FAMINE.
IT HASN'T RAINED IN 12 YEARS! HOW CAN WE LIVE HERE?

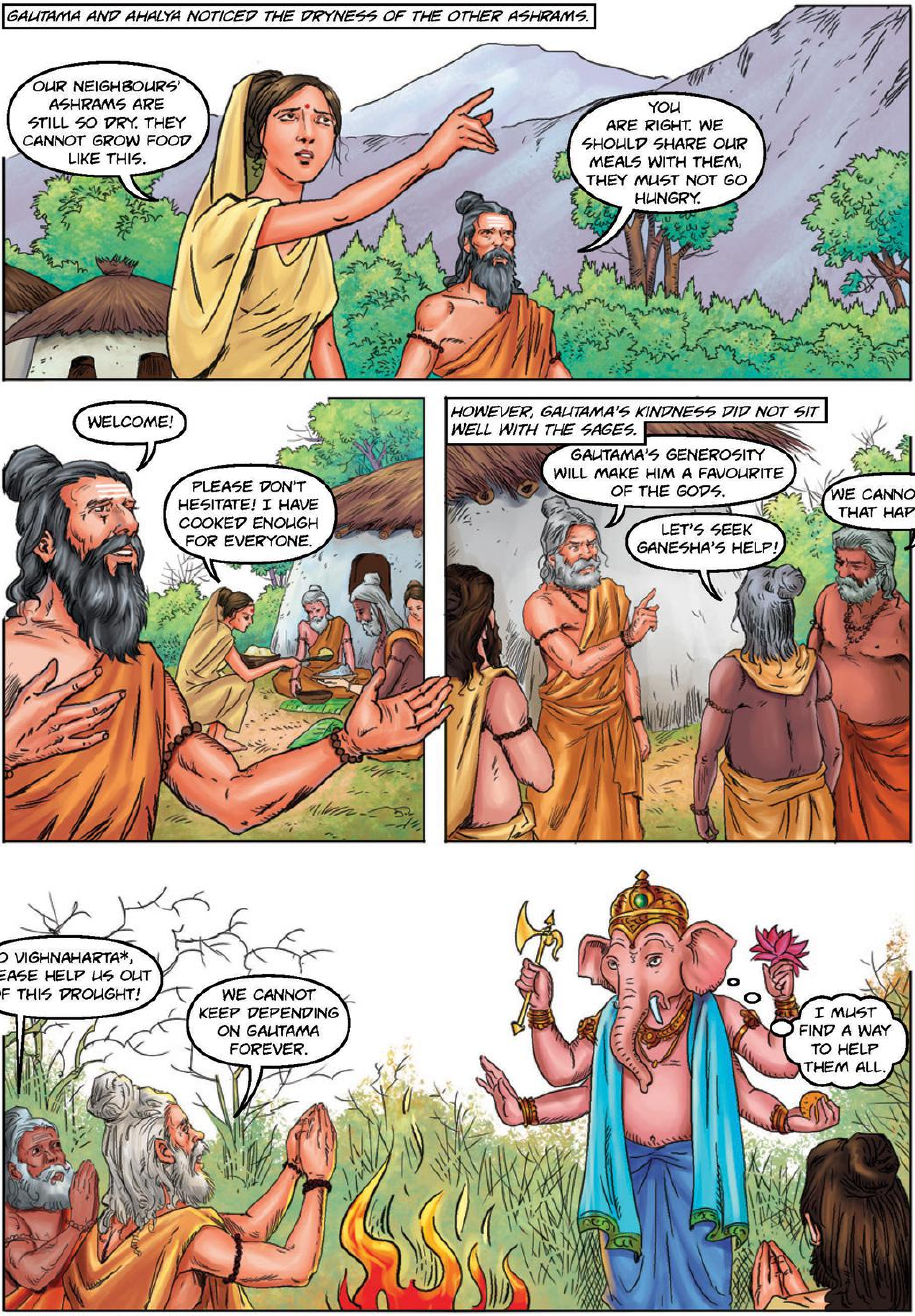


WE CANNOT GO ON LIKE THIS. I SHALL PERFORM A PENANCE AND INVOKE VARUNA.
O LORD VARUNA, PLEASE BLESS OUR BARREN LAND WITH WATER.
I AM PLEASED WITH YOUR DEVOTION, GAUTAMA. I SHALL GRANT YOUR WISH.
THIS WELL IN YOUR ASHRAM WILL NEVER RUN DRY. YOU WILL NEVER FACE A DROUGHT AGAIN, GAUTAMA.
WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL, LORD!
USING VARUNA'S WELL, GAUTAMA BEGAN IRRIGATING HIS LAND.
WE MUST RESTORE OUR ASHRAM TO ITS PREVIOUS GLORY, SO THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH FOOD AND WATER FOR EVERYONE.

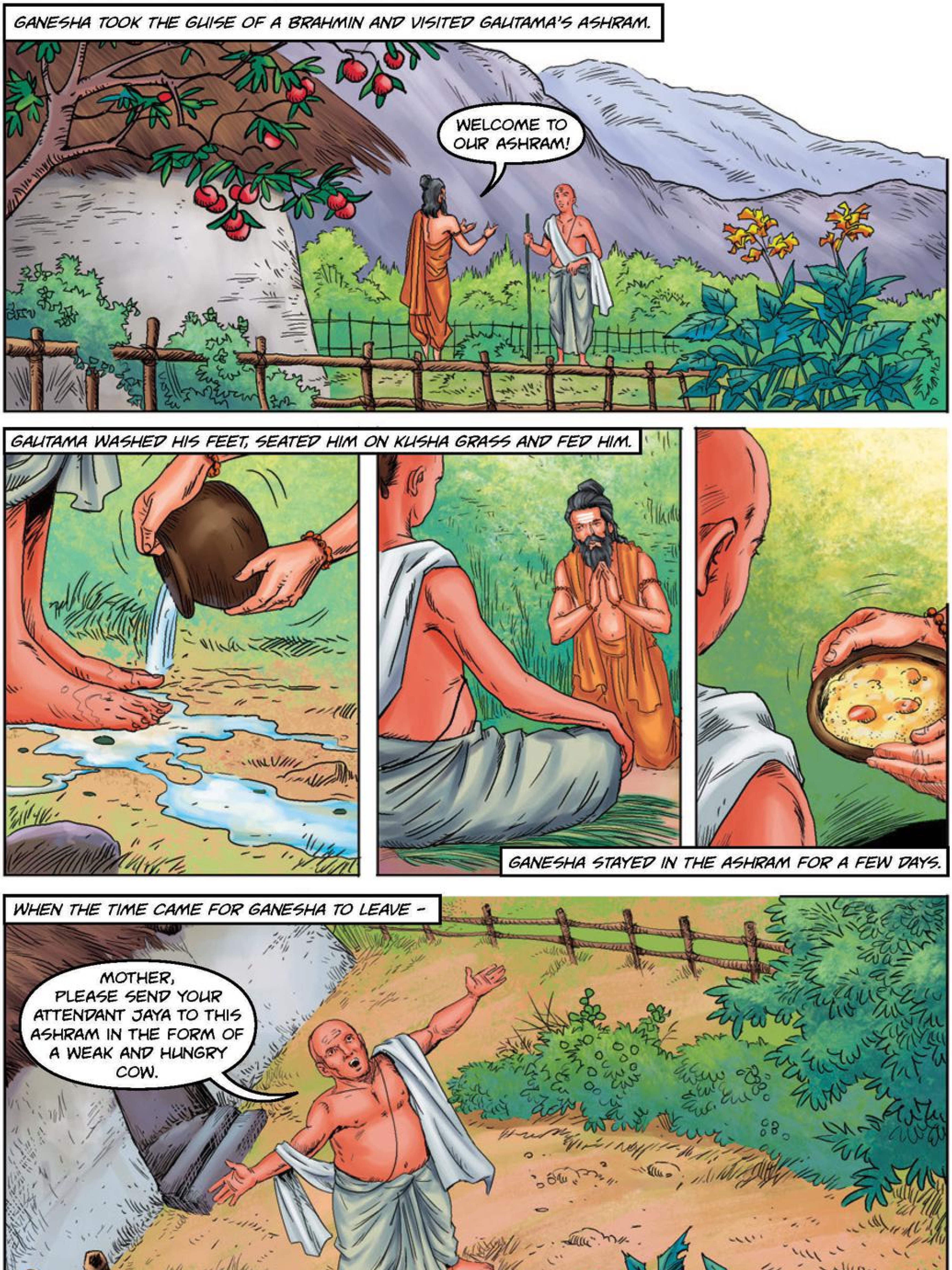

SOON, GAUTAMA AND AHALYA'S ASHRAM WAS BOUNTIFUL AGAIN.
NOW THAT WE HAVE GROWN SO MANY GRAINS, FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, I CAN FINALLY COOK A GOOD MEAL FOR YOU.
WE MUST INVITE ALL OUR NEIGHBOURS TO PARTAKE IN OUR BLESSING.


FRIENDS, PLEASE HELP YOURSELVES TO AS MUCH WATER AS YOU WANT.


HOWEVER, THE OTHER ASHRAMS REMAINED DRY EVEN IF THEY RECEIVED WATER, BECAUSE THE OTHER SAGES WERE BURNING WITH JEALOUSY.
WHY SHOULD ONLY GAUTAMA'S ASHRAM HAVE A WELL BRIMMING WITH WATER, AND NOT OURS?
YES, WHY DO WE HAVE TO TROUBLE OURSELVES AND GO TO HIS ASHRAM TO TAKE WATER?

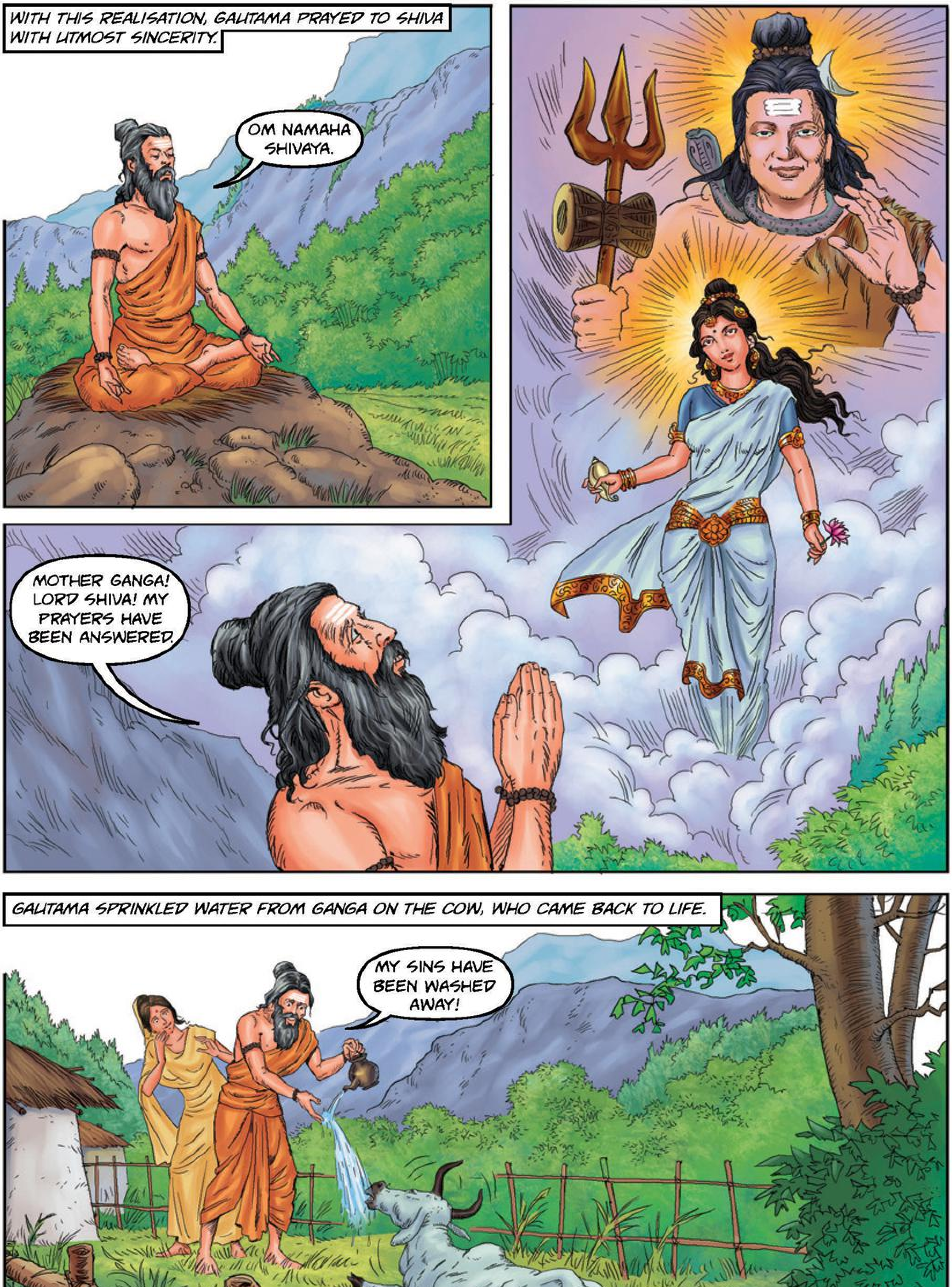


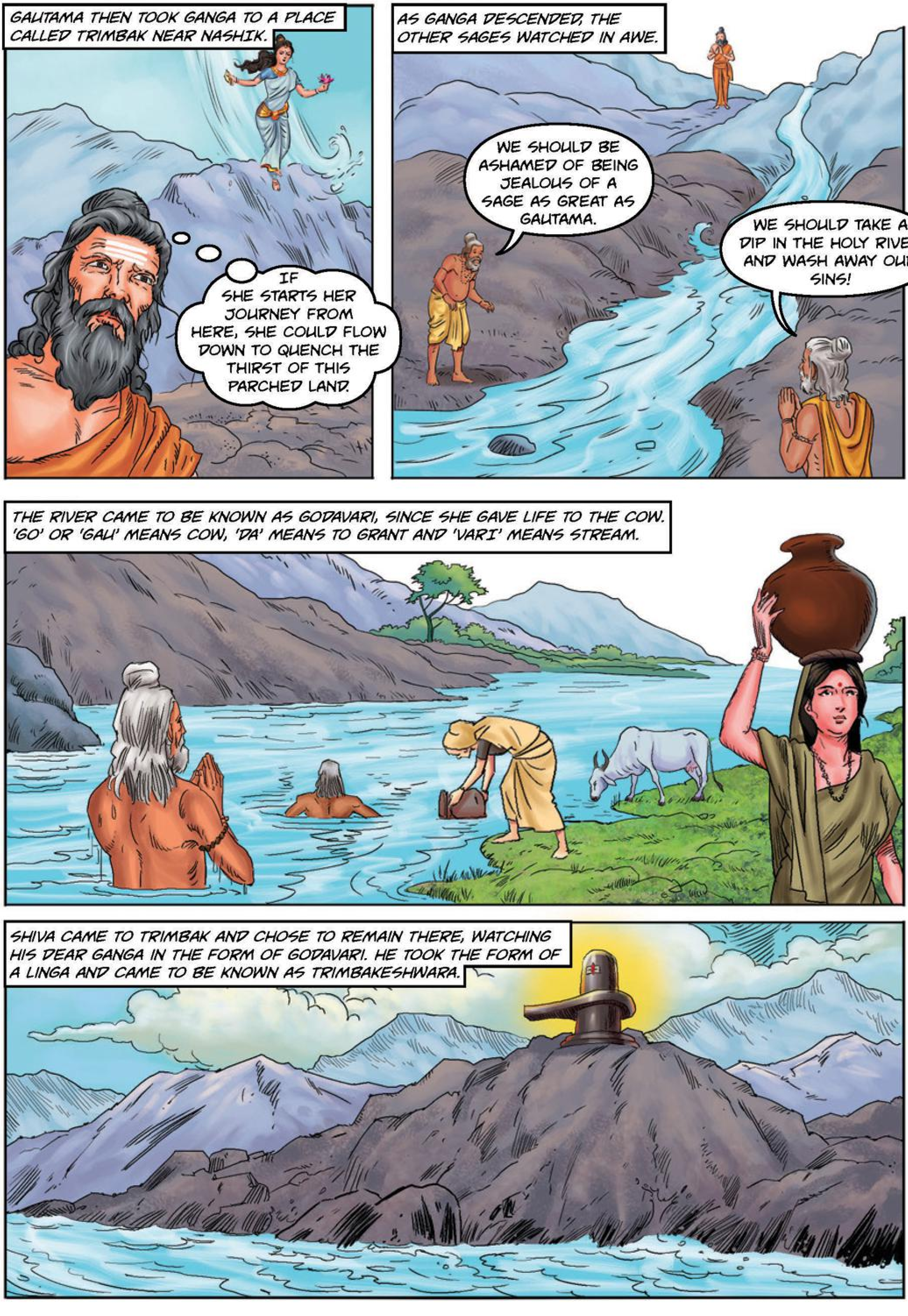
*REMOVER OF OBSTACLES

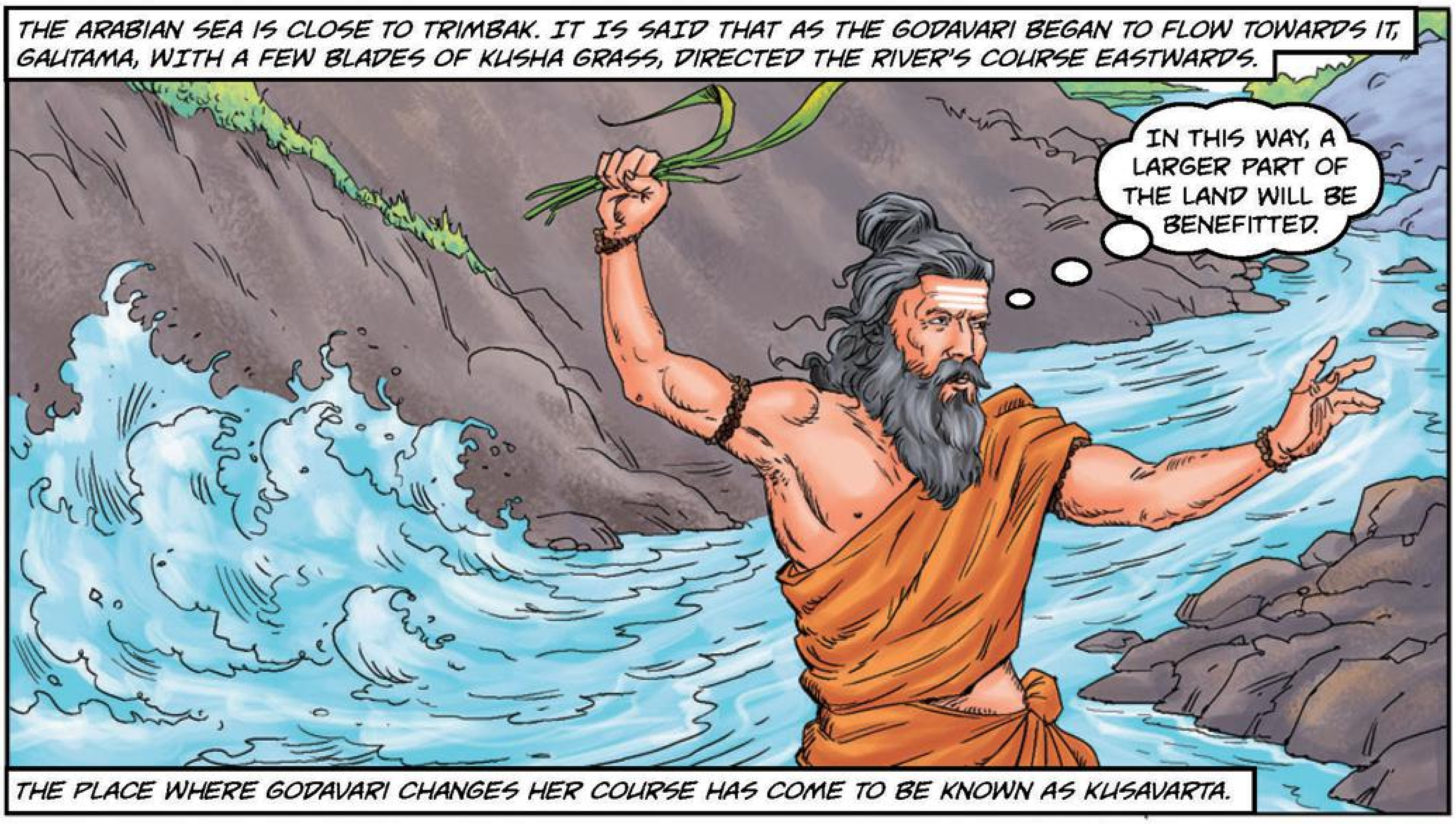

GANESHA TOOK THE GUISE OF A BRAHMIN AND VISITED GAUTAMA'S ASHRAM.
WELCOME TO OUR ASHRAM!
GAUTAMA WASHED HIS FEET, SEATED HIM ON KUSHA GRASS AND FED HIM.
GANESHA STAYED IN THE ASHRAM FOR A FEW DAYS.
WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR GANESHA TO LEAVE -
MOTHER, PLEASE SEND YOUR ATTENDANT JAYA TO THIS ASHRAM IN THE FORM OF A WEAK AND HUNGRY COW.

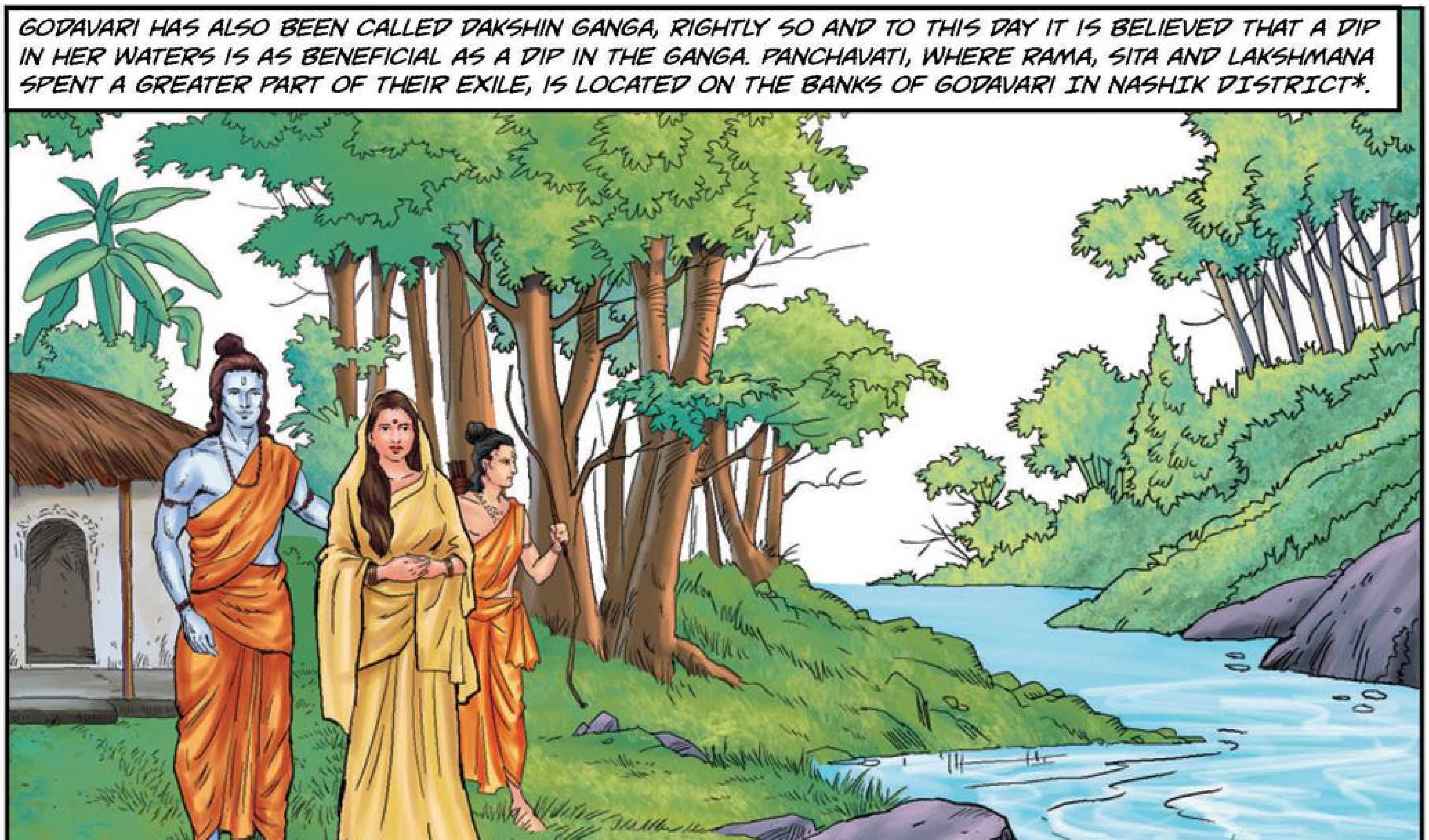
IN A SHORT WHILE -
OH NO! OUR CROPS ARE BEING DESTROYED! HUSBAND, DO SOMETHING!
WHAT IS HAPPENING?
AGHAST, GAUTAMA PICKED UP SOME BLADES OF DARBHA GRASS AND RAN TOWARDS THE COW.
PLEASE GO AWAY! DON'T DESTROY OUR CROPS.
NO SOONER DID THE GRASS IN GAUTAMA'S HAND TOUCH THE COW...
MMAAAA
...THAT IT FELL DEAD.
GAUTAMA HAS KILLED AN INNOCENT CREATURE!
THE SIN WILL FALL ON US, TOO.

THE SAGES BEGAN TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE ASHRAM WHEN –
O LEARNED ONES, PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO TO WASH AWAY MY SIN.
YOU CANNOT BE FORGIVEN!
IT IS AN UNPARDONABLE SIN!
AS THE SAGES LEFT, GAUTAMA LOOKED AT THE PITEOUS STATE OF THE COW.
HOW CAN I REVIVE THIS COW?
JUST THEN –
PRAY TO LORD SHIVA TO RELEASE GANGA. A SPRINKLE OF HER HOLY WATER SHOULD REVIVE THE COW.
AS GANESHA LEFT, GAUTAMA REALISED SOMETHING.
I DID NOT KILL THE COW, NOR HAS SHE DIED. THIS IS A DIVINE ORDINANCE SO THAT I BRING THE SACRED RIVER TO OUR LAND!

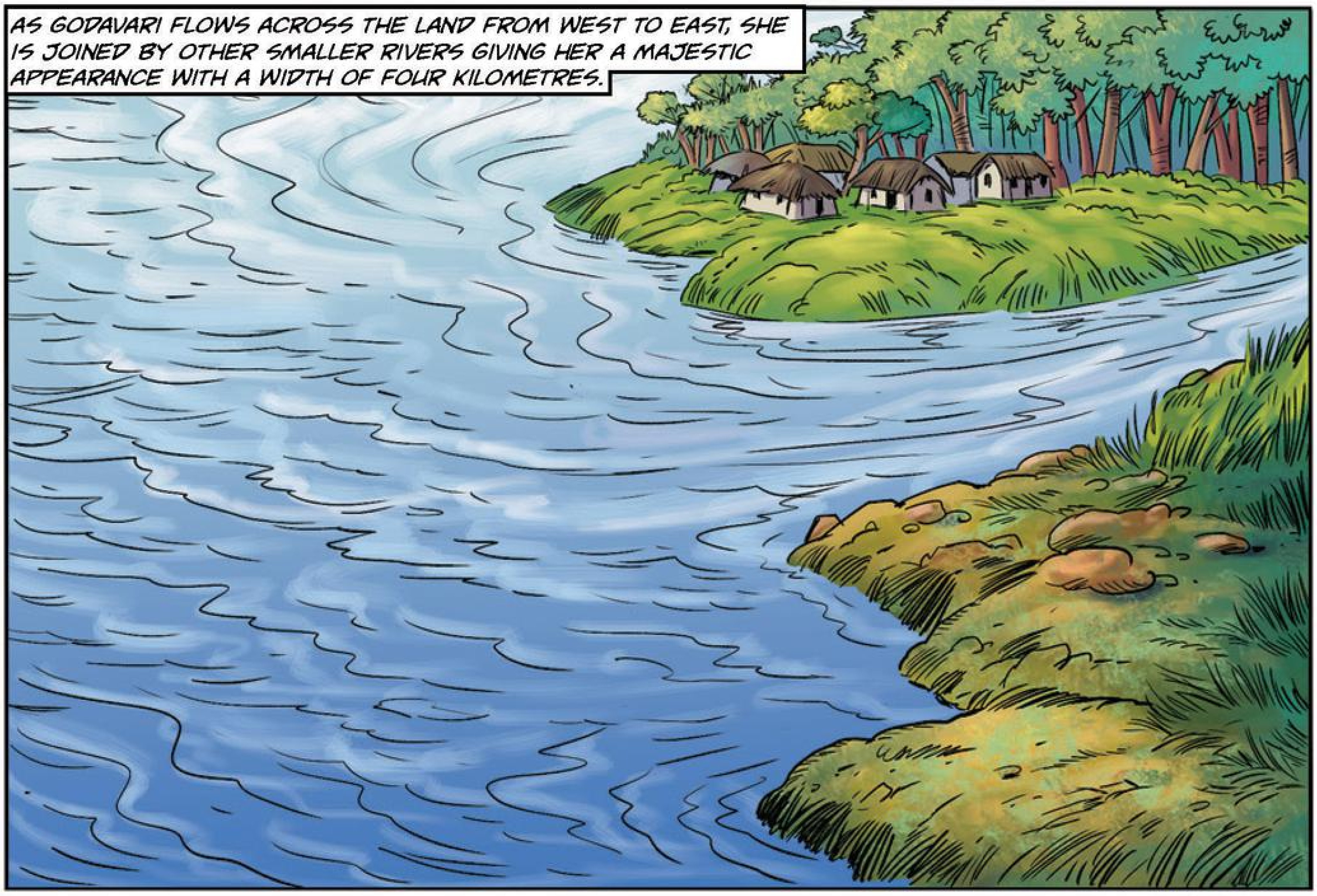

WITH THIS REALISATION, GAUTAMA PRAYED TO SHIVA WITH UTMOST SINCERITY.
OM NAMAHA SHIVAYA.
MOTHER GANGA! LORD SHIVA! MY PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED.
GAUTAMA SPRINKLED WATER FROM GANGA ON THE COW, WHO CAME BACK TO LIFE.
MY SINS HAVE BEEN WASHED AWAY!

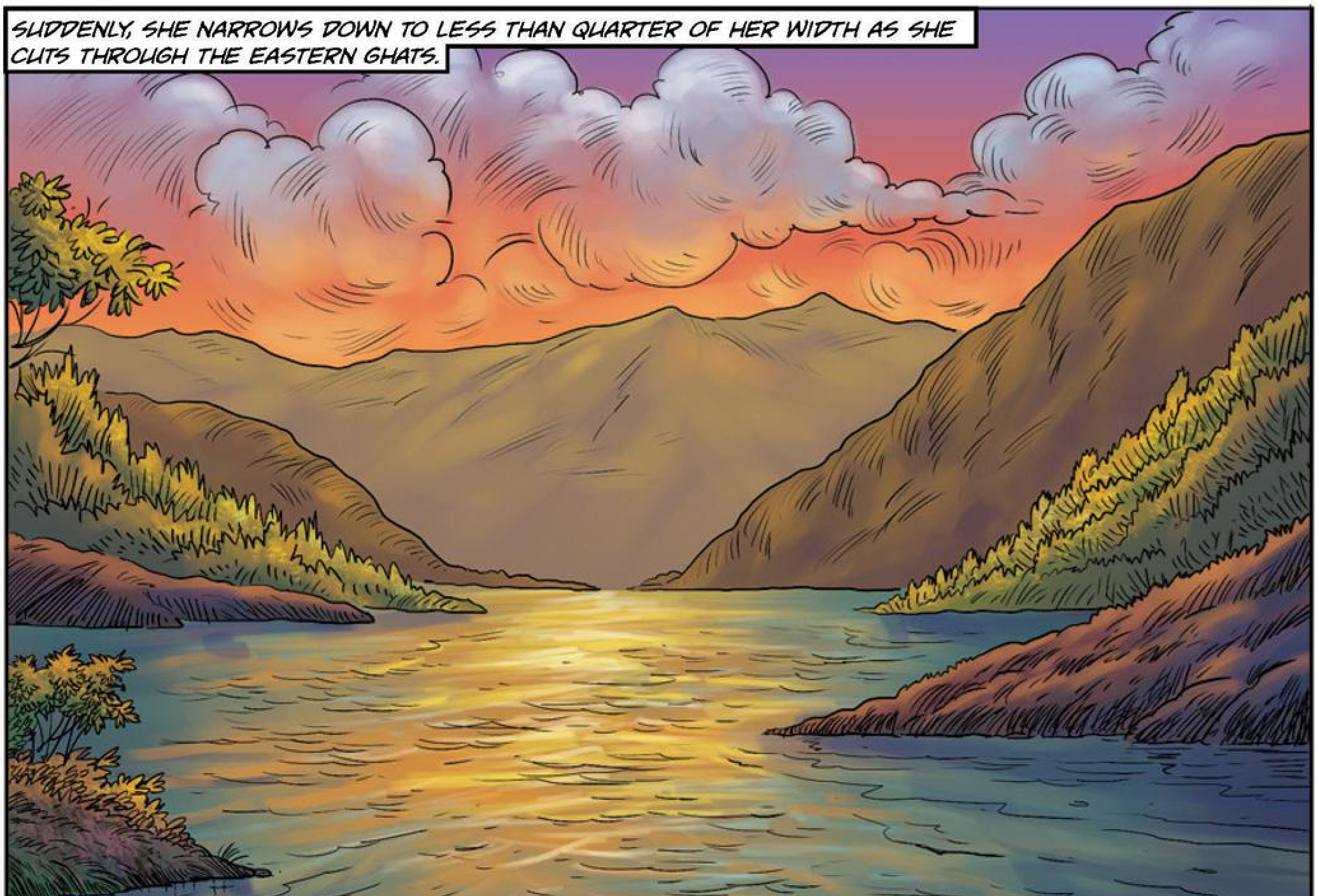

GAUTAMA THEN TOOK GANGA TO A PLACE CALLED TRIMBAK NEAR NASHIK.
IF SHE STARTS HER JOURNEY FROM HERE, SHE COULD FLOW DOWN TO QUENCH THE THIRST OF THIS PARCHED LAND.
AS GANGA DESCENDED, THE OTHER SAGES WATCHED IN AWE.
WE SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF BEING JEALOUS OF A SAGE AS GREAT AS GAUTAMA.
WE SHOULD TAKE A DIP IN THE HOLY RIVER AND WASH AWAY OUR SINS!
THE RIVER CAME TO BE KNOWN AS GODAVARI, SINCE SHE GAVE LIFE TO THE COW. 'GO' OR 'GAU' MEANS COW, 'DA' MEANS TO GRANT AND 'VARI' MEANS STREAM.
SHIVA CAME TO TRIMBAK AND CHOSE TO REMAIN THERE, WATCHING HIS DEAR GANGA IN THE FORM OF GODAVARI. HE TOOK THE FORM OF A LINGA AND CAME TO BE KNOWN AS TRIMBAKESHWARA.

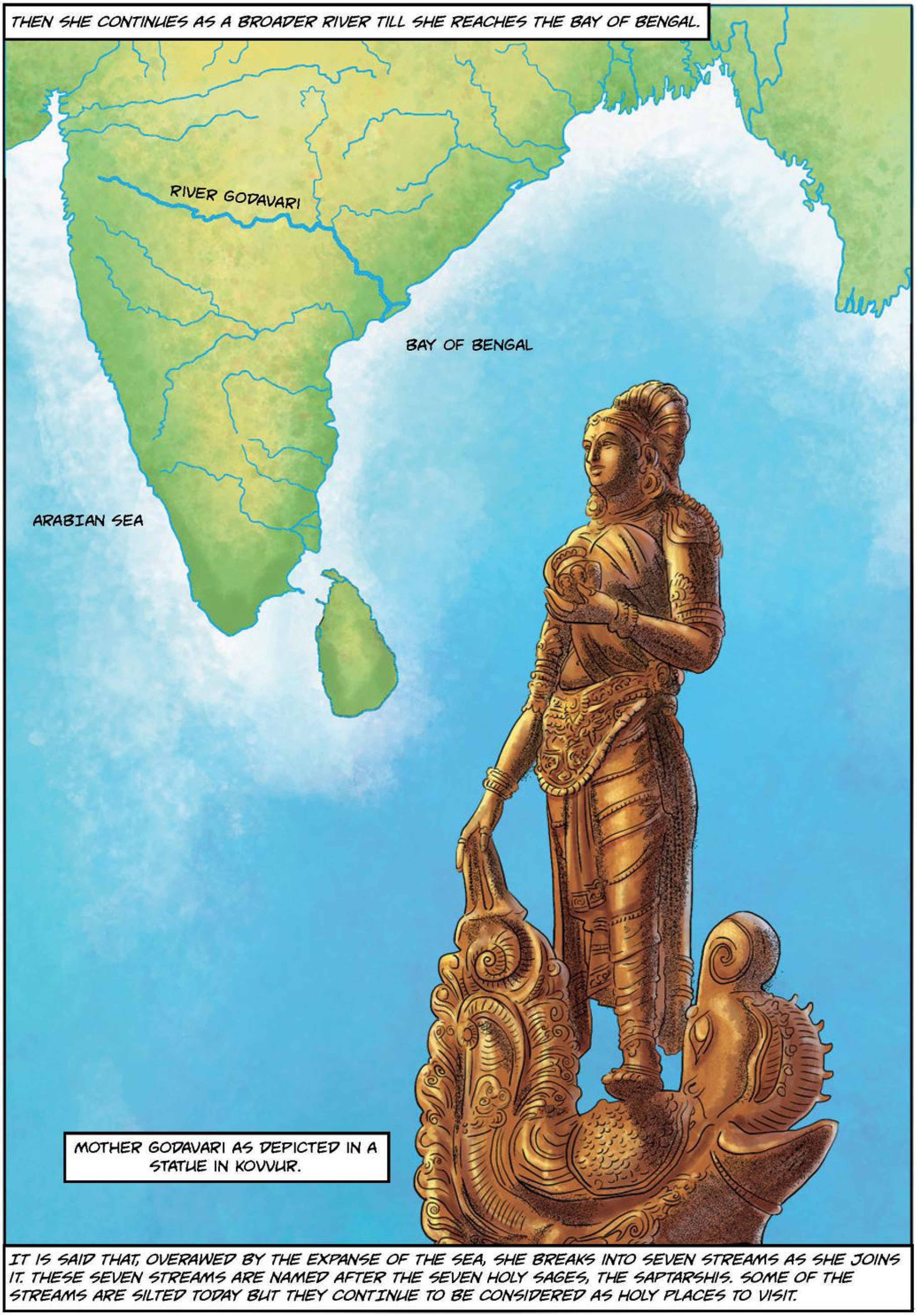




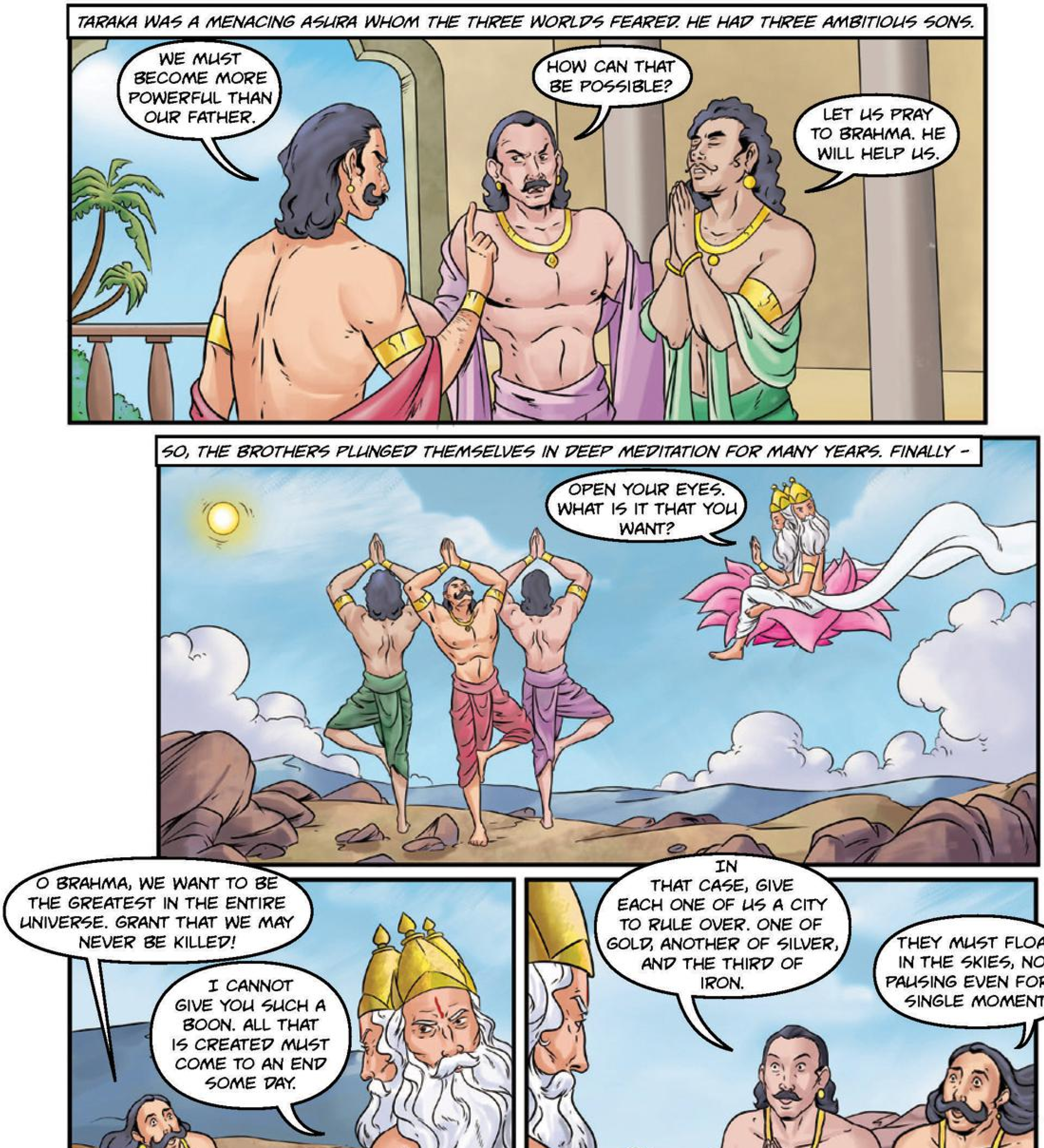
*THE AREA WAS CALLED PANCHAVATI BEFORE THE RAMAYANA. IT IS SAID THAT SINCE LAKSHMANA CUT SHURPANAKHA'S NOSE HERE, IT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS NASHIK.


AS GODAVARI FLOWS ACROSS THE LAND FROM WEST TO EAST, SHE IS JOINED BY OTHER SMALLER RIVERS GIVING HER A MAJESTIC APPEARANCE WITH A WIDTH OF FOUR KILOMETRES.

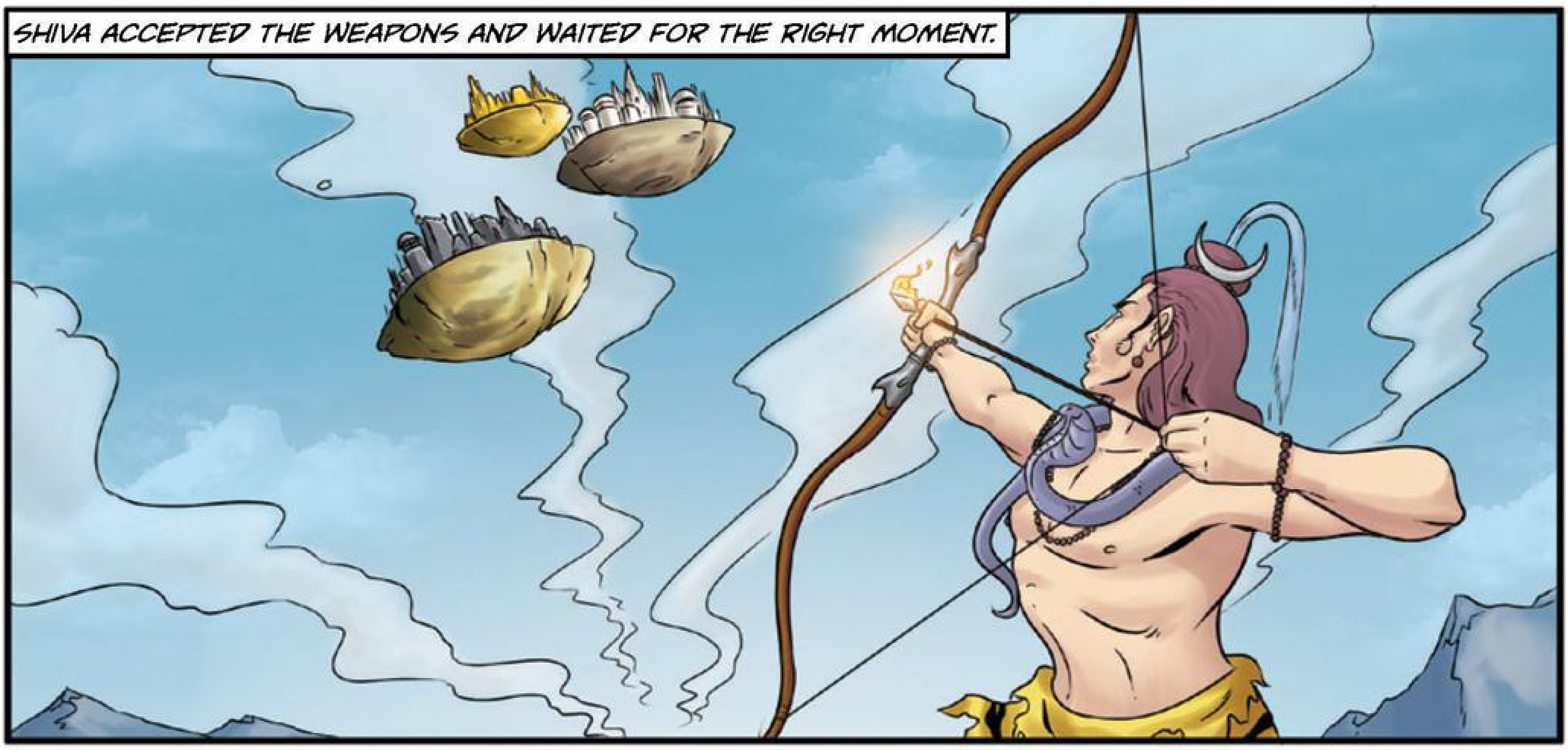

SUDDENLY, SHE NARROWS DOWN TO LESS THAN QUARTER OF HER WIDTH AS SHE CUTS THROUGH THE EASTERN GHATS.

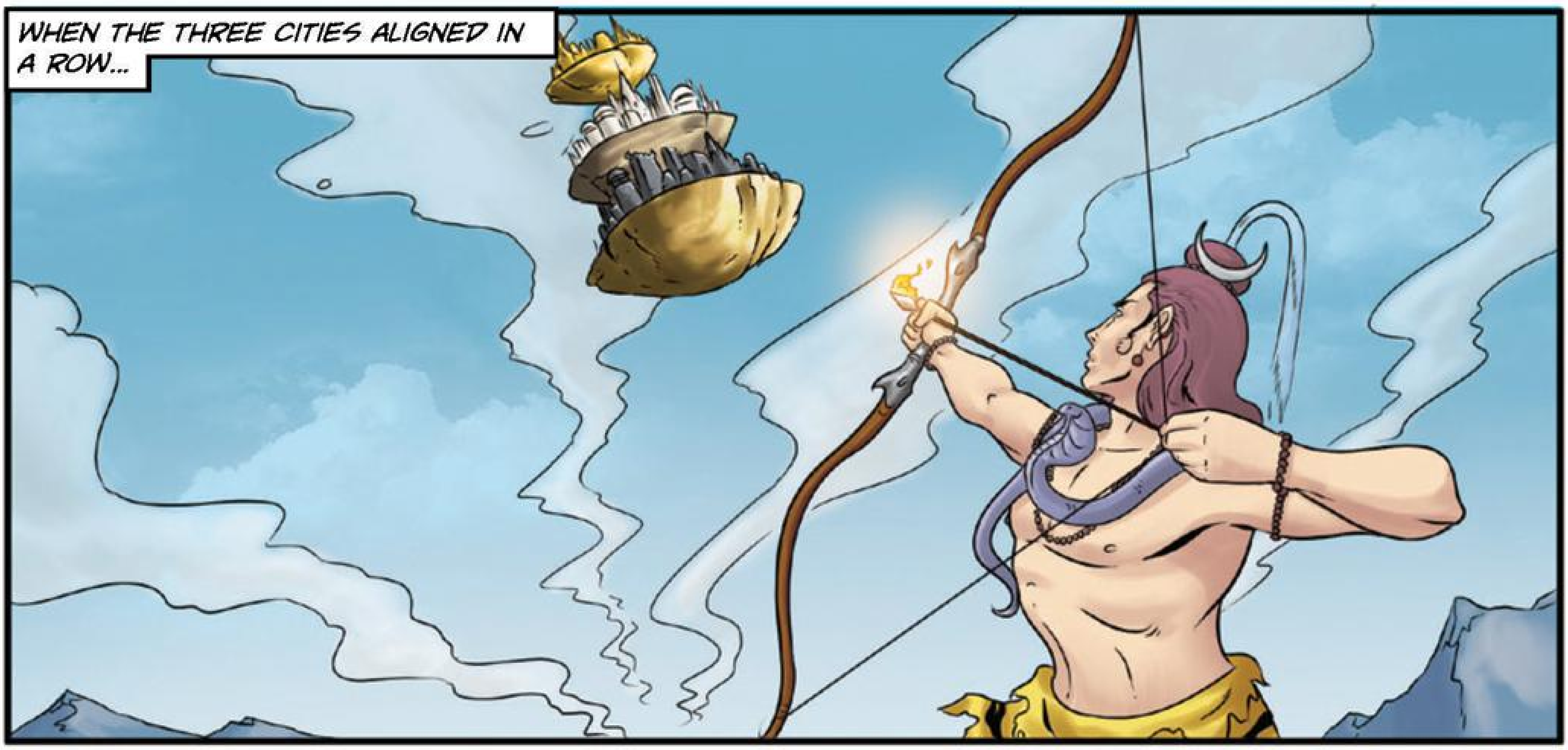

THEN SHE CONTINUES AS A BROADER RIVER TILL SHE REACHES THE BAY OF BENGAL.
RIVER GODAVARI
BAY OF BENGAL
ARABIAN SEA
MOTHER GODAVARI AS DEPICTED IN A STATUE IN KOVVUR.
IT IS SAID THAT, OVERAWED BY THE EXPANSE OF THE SEA, SHE BREAKS INTO SEVEN STREAMS AS SHE JOINS IT. THESE SEVEN STREAMS ARE NAMED AFTER THE SEVEN HOLY SAGES, THE SAPTARSHIS. SOME OF THE STREAMS ARE SILTED TODAY BUT THEY CONTINUE TO BE CONSIDERED AS HOLY PLACES TO VISIT.

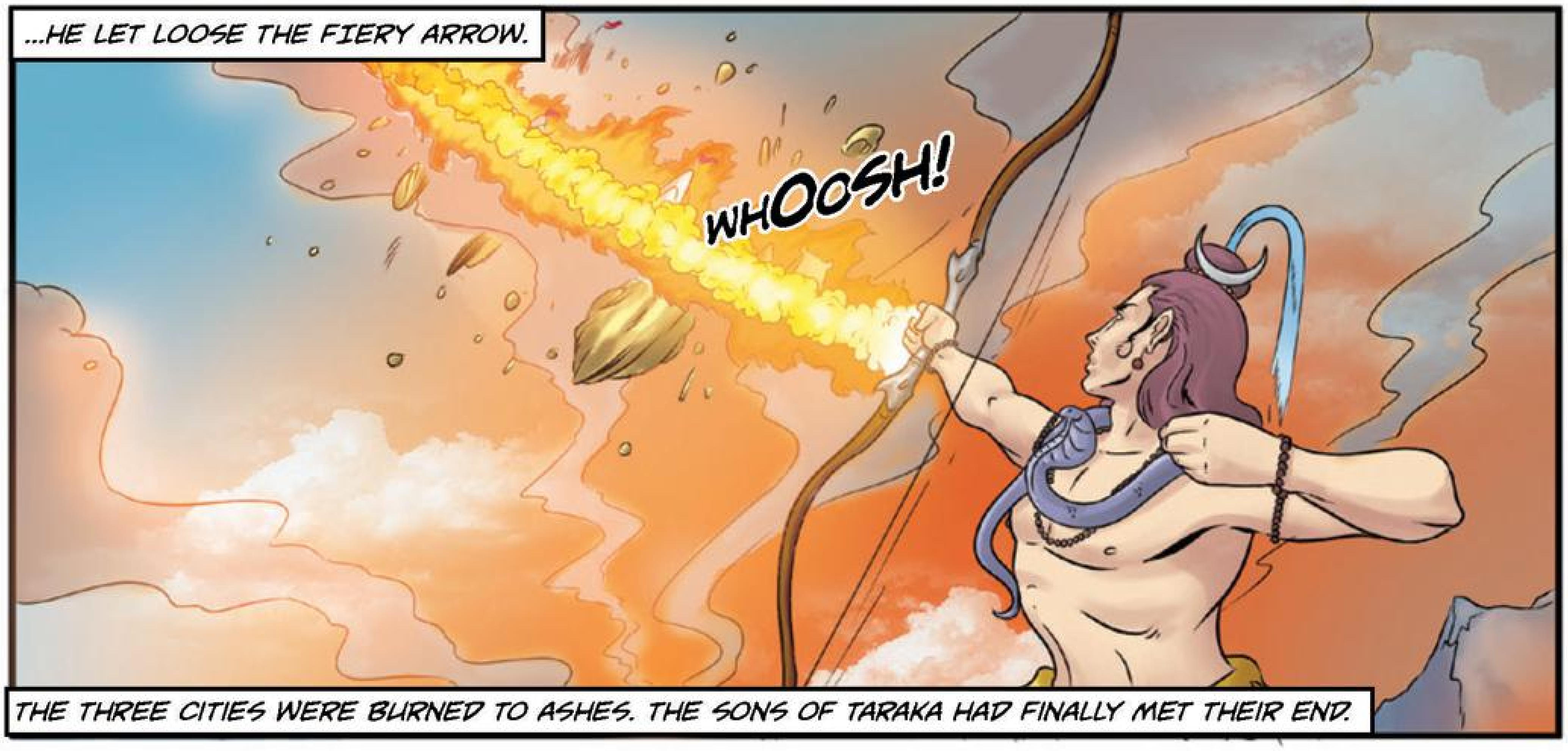
NARMADA

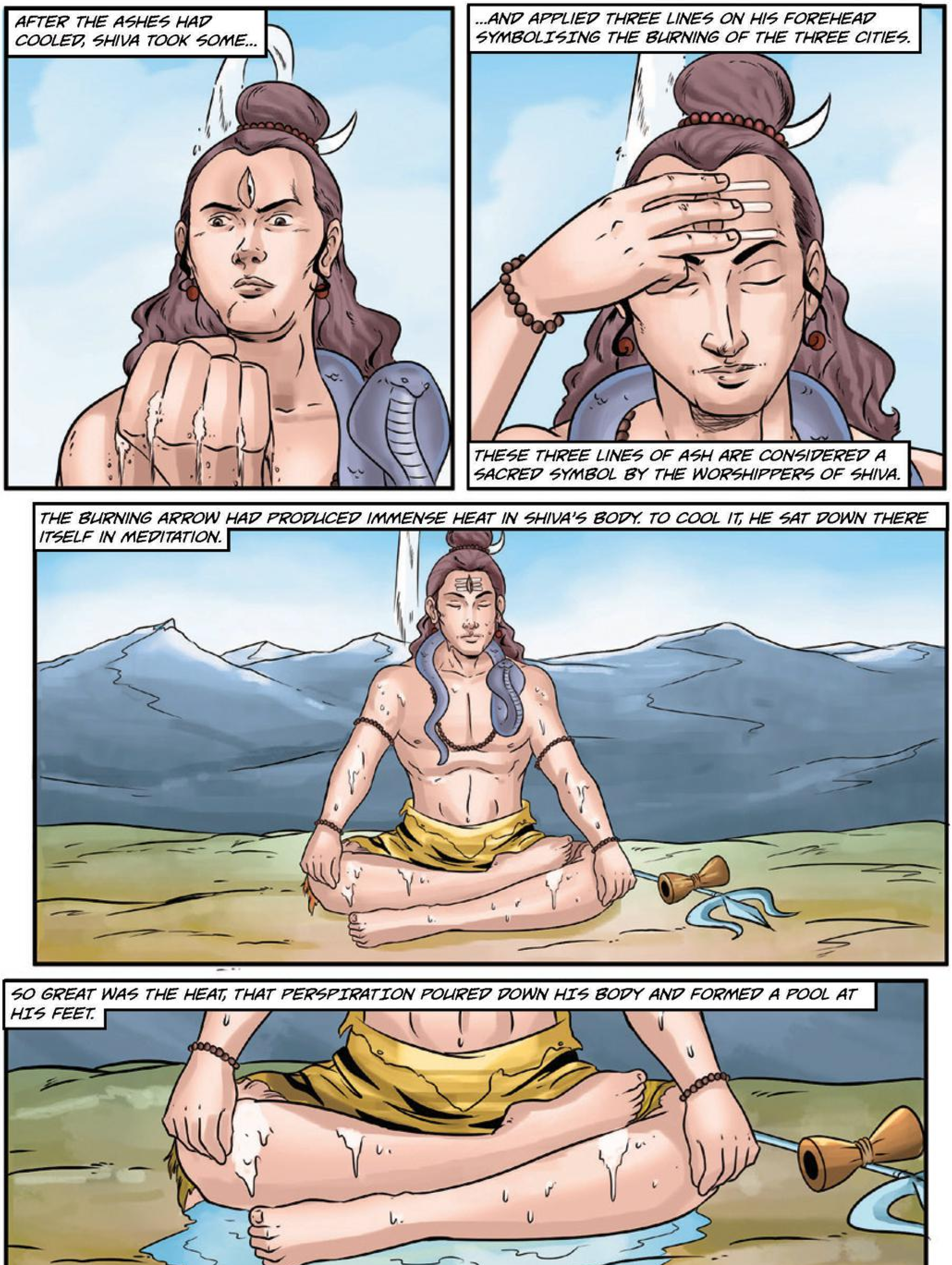

TARAKA WAS A MENACING ASURA WHOM THE THREE WORLDS FEARED. HE HAD THREE AMBITIOUS SONS.
WE MUST BECOME MORE POWERFUL THAN OUR FATHER.
HOW CAN THAT BE POSSIBLE?
LET US PRAY TO BRAHMA. HE WILL HELP US.
SO, THE BROTHERS PLUNGED THEMSELVES IN DEEP MEDITATION FOR MANY YEARS. FINALLY -
OPEN YOUR EYES. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT?
O BRAHMA, WE WANT TO BE THE GREATEST IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE. GRANT THAT WE MAY NEVER BE KILLED!
I CANNOT GIVE YOU SUCH A BOON. ALL THAT IS CREATED MUST COME TO AN END SOME DAY.
IN THAT CASE, GIVE EACH ONE OF US A CITY TO RULE OVER. ONE OF GOLD, ANOTHER OF SILVER, AND THE THIRD OF IRON.
THEY MUST FLOAT IN THE SKIES, NOT PAUSING EVEN FOR A SINGLE MOMENT.

*INDRALOKA, PRITHVILOKA AND PATAALOKA - HEAVEN, EARTH AND THE UNDERWORLD


SHIVA ACCEPTED THE WEAPONS AND WAITED FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.


WHEN THE THREE CITIES ALIGNED IN A ROW...


...HE LET LOOSE THE FIERY ARROW.
WHOOSH!
THE THREE CITIES WERE BURNED TO ASHES. THE SONS OF TARAKA HAD FINALLY MET THEIR END.

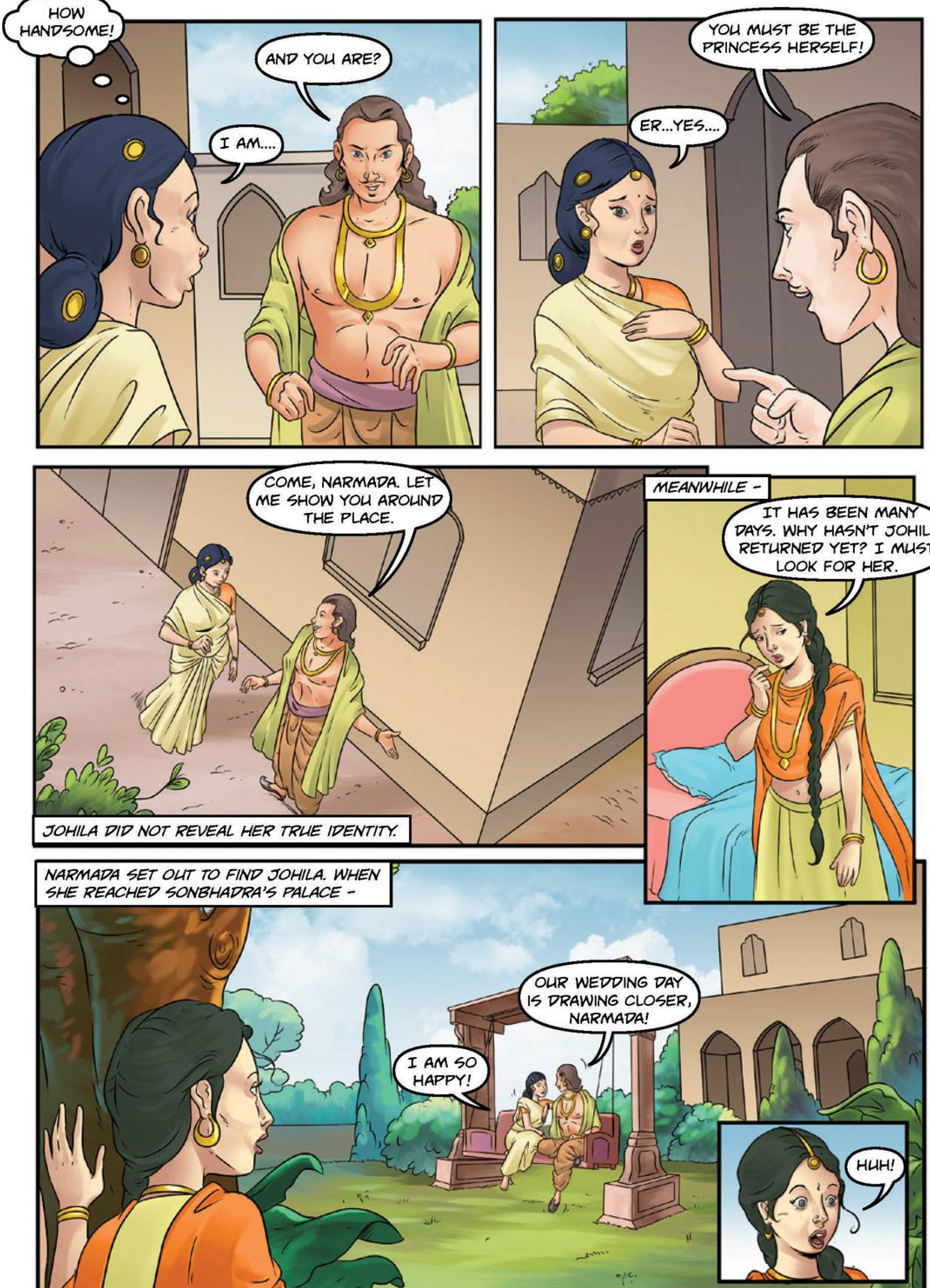

AFTER THE ASHES HAD COOLED, SHIVA TOOK SOME...
...AND APPLIED THREE LINES ON HIS FOREHEAD SYMBOLISING THE BURNING OF THE THREE CITIES.
THESE THREE LINES OF ASH ARE CONSIDERED A SACRED SYMBOL BY THE WORSHIPPERS OF SHIVA.
THE BURNING ARROW HAD PRODUCED IMMENSE HEAT IN SHIVA'S BODY. TO COOL IT, HE SAT DOWN THERE ITSELF IN MEDITATION.
SO GREAT WAS THE HEAT, THAT PERSPIRATION POURED DOWN HIS BODY AND FORMED A POOL AT HIS FEET.

*'DELICATE', 'DEMURE' OR 'GENTLE'

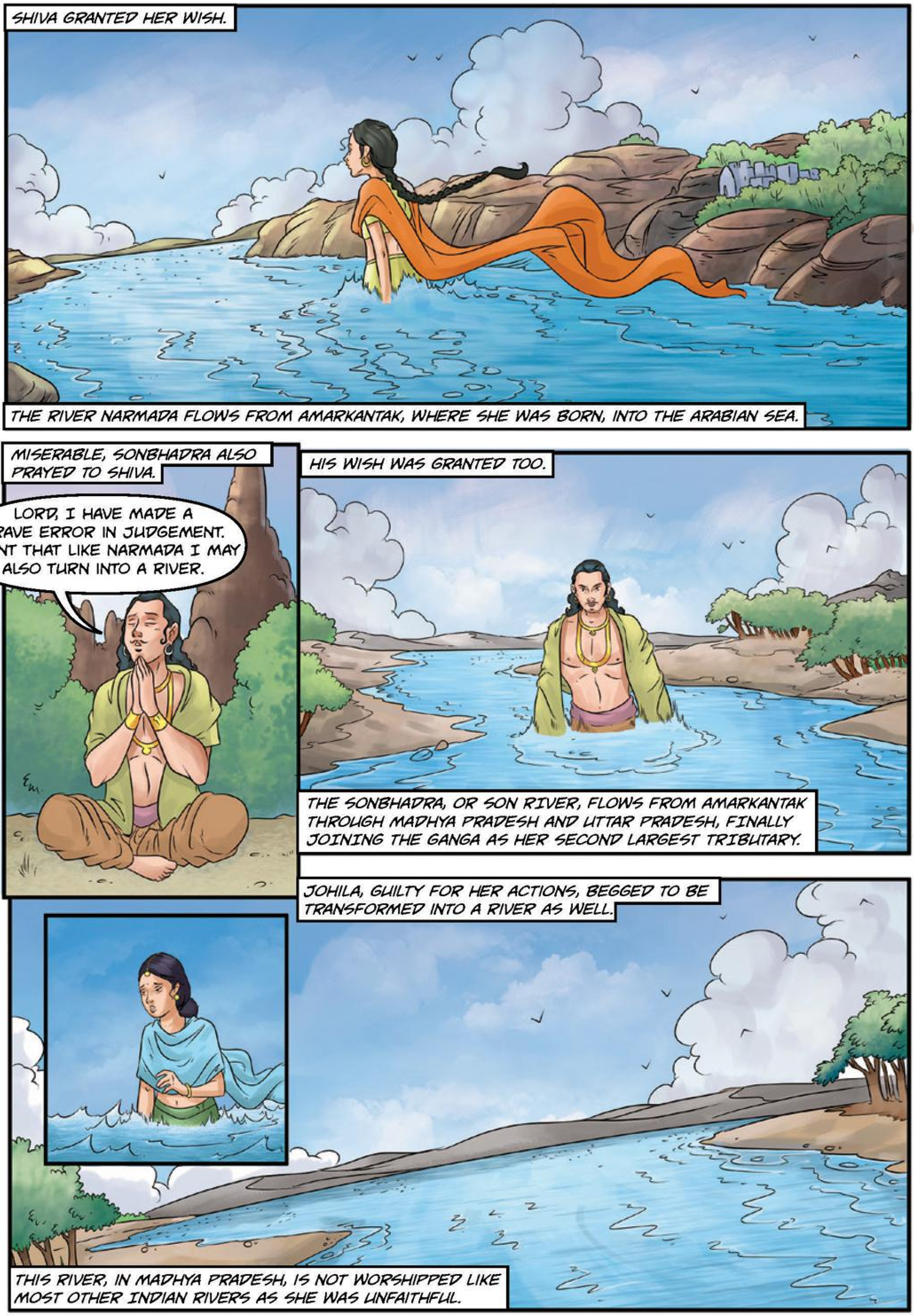
^AMARKANTAK LIES IN THE MAIKALI MOUNTAINS IN THE WESTERN GHATS, IN MADHYA PRADESH.

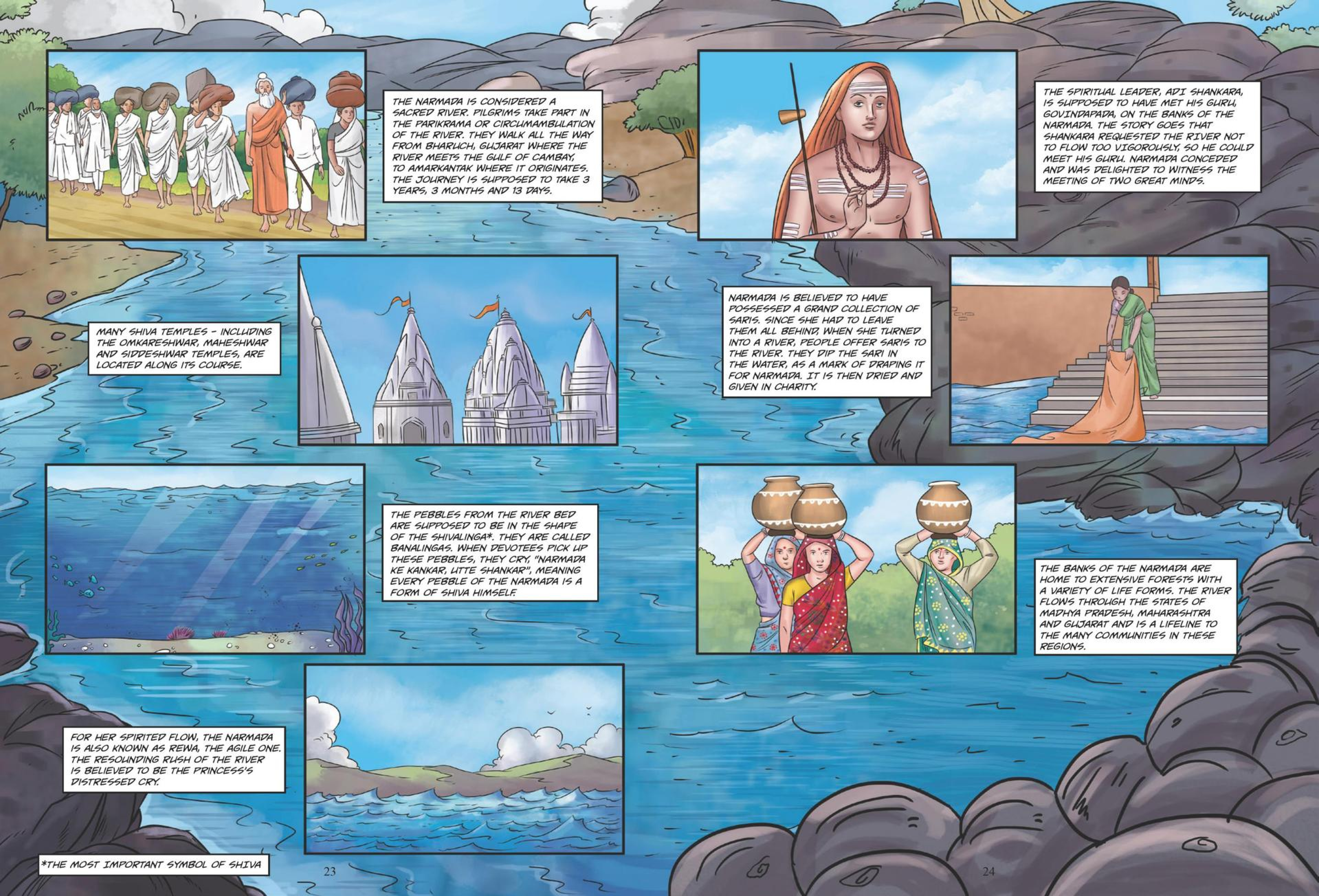
THE KING OF THE REGION, MEKEL, WAS A DEVOTEE OF SHIVA. SHIVA CALLED HIM.
KING MEKEL, I ENTRUST MY DAUGHTER NARMADA TO YOUR CARE. RAISE HER WELL.
IT WOULD BE AN HONOUR, LORD.
NARMADA BROUGHT GREAT JOY TO HER FATHER AS SHE GREW UP.
LOOK, FATHER! THIS LITTLE BIRD'S WING HAS HEALED. SHE IS ALL SET TO FLY!
YOU HAVE TAKEN GOOD CARE OF HER, MY CHILD.
THE YEARS ROLLED BY. ONE DAY, ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM OF THE LAND -
HEAR! HEAR! KING MEKEL IS LOOKING FOR A GROOM FOR THE PRINCESS NARMADA. ANY YOUNG MAN, WHO BRINGS TO THE KING A FLOWER THAT SURPASSES THE PRINCESS'S BEAUTY, WILL BE HER GROOM.
SUITORS FROM ACROSS THE LAND CAME WITH THE MOST EXQUISITE FLOWERS, BUT -
NO, NOT GOOD ENOUGH!
THE KING WAS UNHAPPY WITH ALL OF THEM.
THEN -
GREETINGS, O KING! I AM SONBHADRA AND I HAVE WITH ME THE GULBAKAWALI FLOWER.
IT IS A RARE BEAUTY AND IS USED IN THE HEALING OF ILLNESSES TOO.

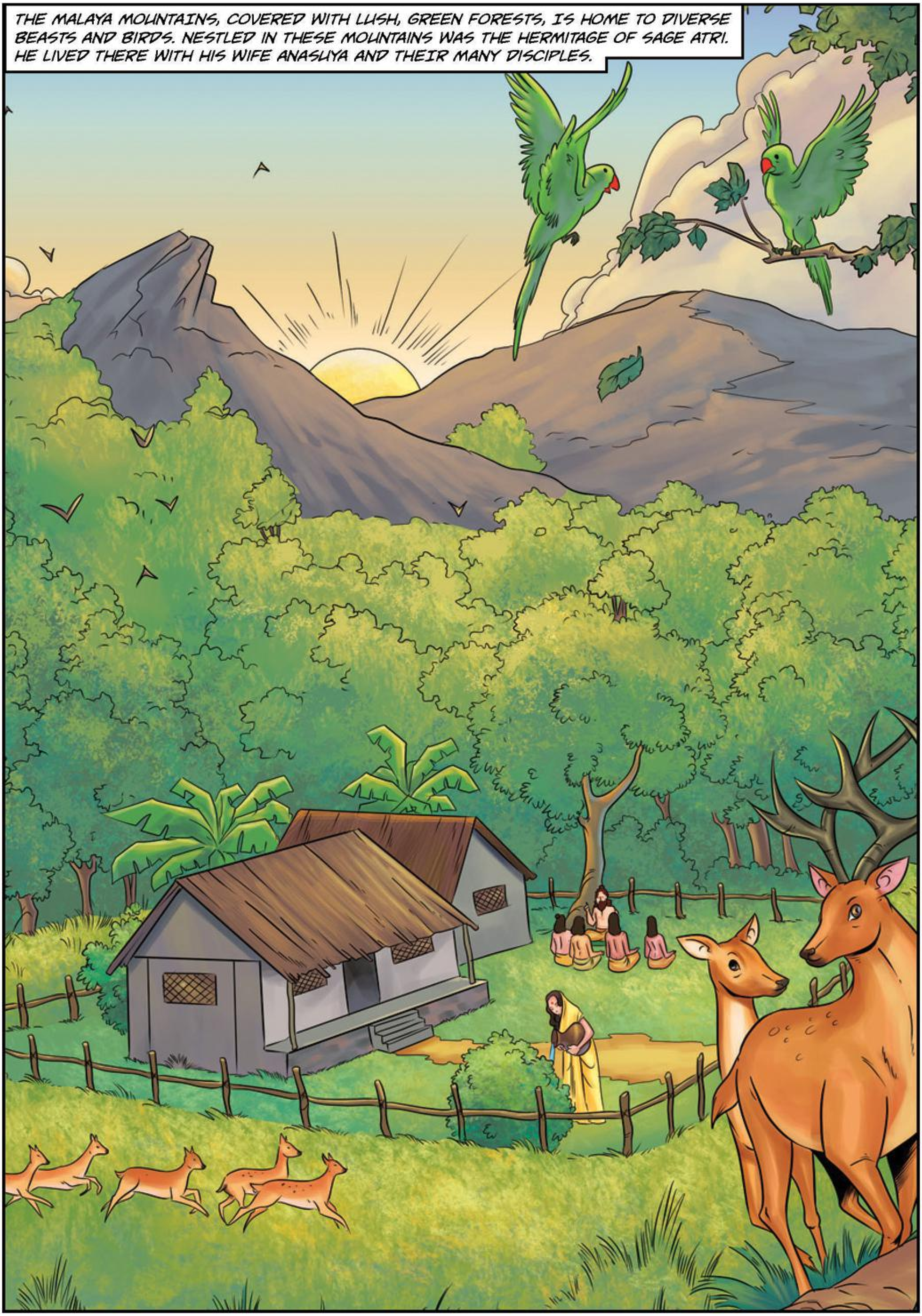
SONBHADRA, YOU HAVE PROVEN TO BE A FINE MATCH FOR NARMADA! LET THE WEDDING PREPARATIONS BEGIN!
THE HONOUR IS MINE, O KING.
WHEN THE NEWS REACHED NARMADA –
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF A MAN SONBHADRA IS. HOW DO I FIND OUT?
SHE CALLED HER ATTENDANT, JOHILA.
JOHILA, I'M FORBIDDEN FROM GOING OUTSIDE OR MEETING SONBHADRA BEFORE THE WEDDING.
WILL YOU FIND OUT IF HE IS A KIND AND CARING PERSON?
AS YOU WISH, PRINCESS NARMADA.
WONDERFUL! HERE, WEAR MY CLOTHES. COME BACK SOON, I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU.
JOHILA SET OUT TO ENQUIRE ABOUT SONBHADRA. WHEN SHE REACHED THE PLACE WHERE HE STAYED –
EXCUSE ME, SIR. DO YOU KNOW SONBHADRA? THE MAN WHO IS TO MARRY KING MEKEL'S DAUGHTER?
I AM SONBHADRA.

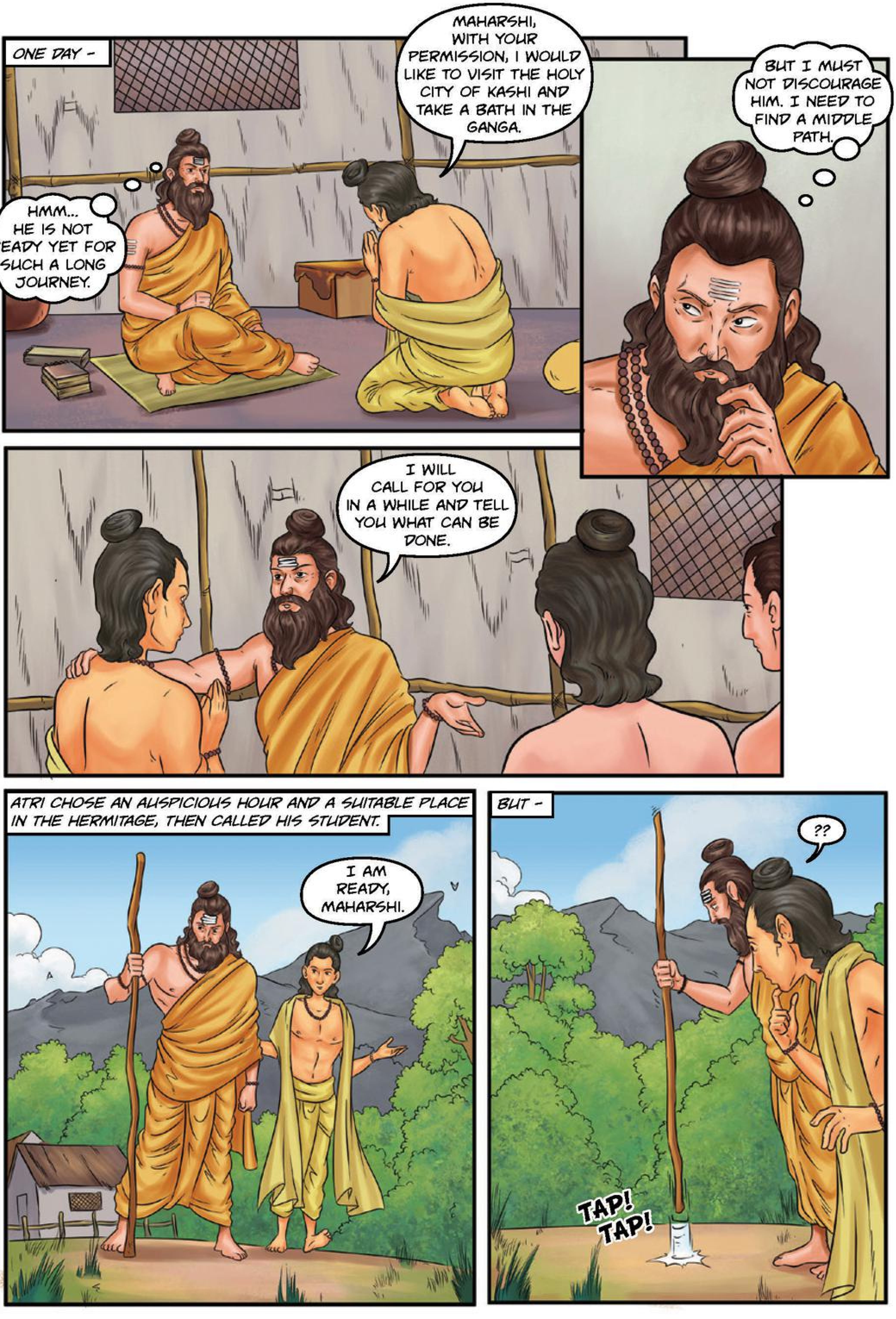

HOW HANDSOME!
AND YOU ARE?
I AM....
YOU MUST BE THE PRINCESS HERSELF!
ER...YES....
COME, NARMADA. LET ME SHOW YOU AROUND THE PLACE.
JOHILA DID NOT REVEAL HER TRUE IDENTITY.
MEANWHILE -
IT HAS BEEN MANY DAYS. WHY HASN'T JOHILA RETURNED YET? I MUST LOOK FOR HER.
NARMADA SET OUT TO FIND JOHILA. WHEN SHE REACHED SONBHADRA'S PALACE -
OUR WEDDING DAY IS DRAWING CLOSER, NARMADA!
I AM SO HAPPY!
HUH!

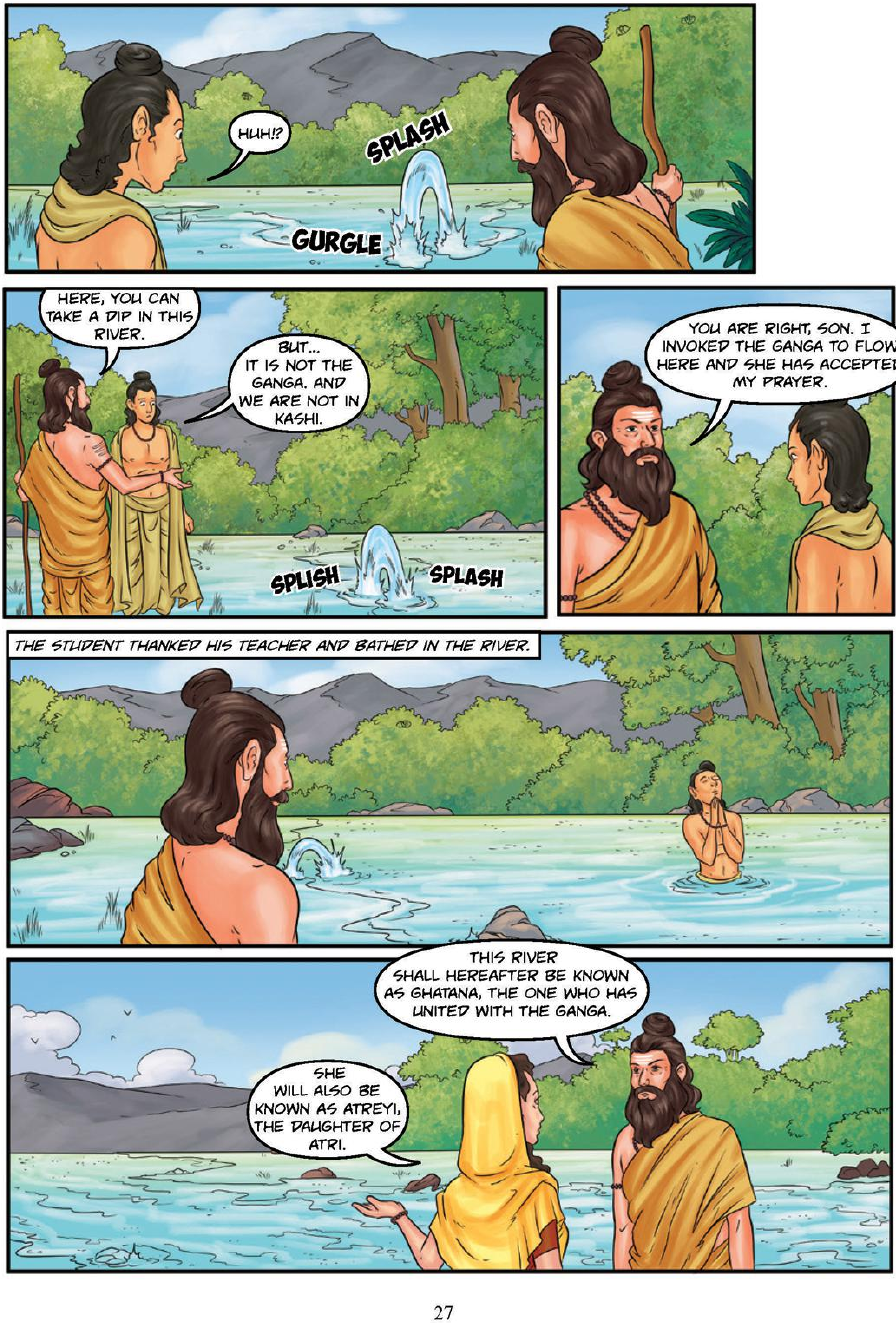
JOHILA! HOW COULD YOU BETRAY ME?
JOHILA? SHE IS NARMADA, THE PRINCESS.
JOHILA'S LIES WERE EXPOSED IN NO TIME.
FORGIVE ME, PRINCESS!
IT IS TOO LATE FOR FORGIVENESS.
I CANNOT BEAR TO STAY HERE ANYMORE.
NARMADA THEN PRAYED TO SHIVA.
FATHER, LET ME RETURN TO WATER, THE ELEMENT I WAS BORN FROM. TURN ME INTO A RIVER THAT FLOWS AWAY FROM THIS PLACE.

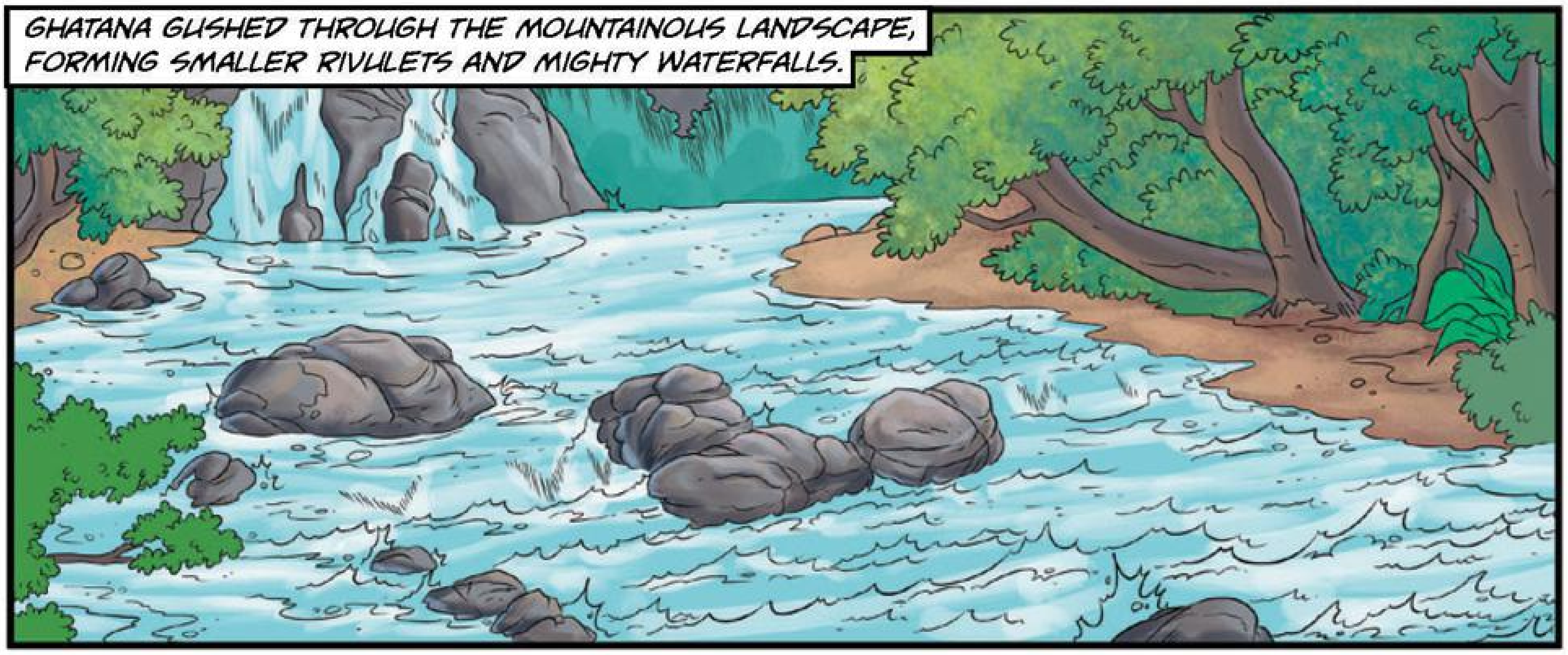

SHIVA GRANTED HER WISH.
THE RIVER NARMADA FLOWS FROM AMARKANTAK, WHERE SHE WAS BORN, INTO THE ARABIAN SEA.
MISERABLE, SONBHADRA ALSO PRAYED TO SHIVA.
LORD, I HAVE MADE A GRAVE ERROR IN JUDGEMENT. GRANT THAT LIKE NARMADA I MAY ALSO TURN INTO A RIVER.
HIS WISH WAS GRANTED TOO.
THE SONBHADRA, OR SON RIVER, FLOWS FROM AMARKANTAK THROUGH MADHYA PRADESH AND UTTAR PRADESH, FINALLY JOINING THE GANGA AS HER SECOND LARGEST TRIBUTARY.
JOHILA, GUILTY FOR HER ACTIONS, BEGGED TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A RIVER AS WELL.
THIS RIVER, IN MADHYA PRADESH, IS NOT WORSHIPPED LIKE MOST OTHER INDIAN RIVERS AS SHE WAS UNFAITHFUL.

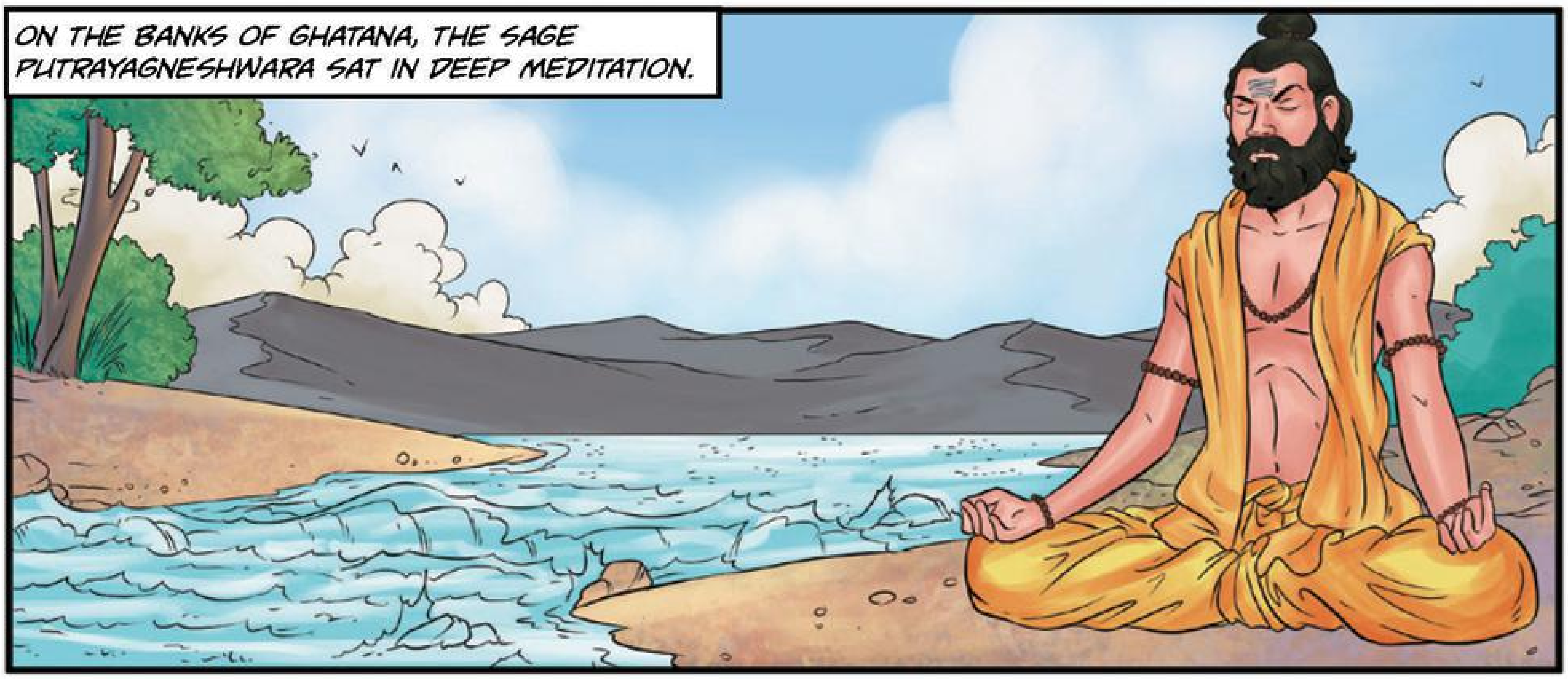

THE NARMADA IS CONSIDERED A SACRED RIVER. PILGRIMS TAKE PART IN THE PARIKRAMA OR CIRCUMAMBULATION OF THE RIVER. THEY WALK ALL THE WAY FROM BHARUCH, GUJARAT WHERE THE RIVER MEETS THE GULF OF CAMBAY, TO AMARKANTAK WHERE IT ORIGINATES. THE JOURNEY IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE 3 YEARS, 3 MONTHS AND 13 DAYS.
MANY SHIVA TEMPLES - INCLUDING THE OMKARESHWAR, MAHESHWAR AND SIDDESHWAR TEMPLES, ARE LOCATED ALONG ITS COURSE.
THE PEBBLES FROM THE RIVER BED ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN THE SHAPE OF THE SHIVALINGA*. THEY ARE CALLED BANALINGAS. WHEN DEVOTEES PICK UP THESE PEBBLES, THEY CRY, "NARMADA KE KANKAR, UTTE SHANKAR", MEANING EVERY PEBBLE OF THE NARMADA IS A FORM OF SHIVA HIMSELF.
FOR HER SPIRITED FLOW, THE NARMADA IS ALSO KNOWN AS REWA, THE AGILE ONE. THE RESOUNDING RUSH OF THE RIVER IS BELIEVED TO BE THE PRINCESS'S DISTRESSED CRY.
*THE MOST IMPORTANT SYMBOL OF SHIVA
THE SPIRITUAL LEADER, ADI SHANKARA, IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE MET HIS GURU, GOVINDAPADA, ON THE BANKS OF THE NARMADA. THE STORY GOES THAT SHANKARA REQUESTED THE RIVER NOT TO FLOW TOO VIGOROUSLY, SO HE COULD MEET HIS GURU. NARMADA CONCEDED AND WAS DELIGHTED TO WITNESS THE MEETING OF TWO GREAT MINDS.
NARMADA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE POSSESSED A GRAND COLLECTION OF SARIS. SINCE SHE HAD TO LEAVE THEM ALL BEHIND, WHEN SHE TURNED INTO A RIVER, PEOPLE OFFER SARIS TO THE RIVER. THEY DIP THE SARI IN THE WATER, AS A MARK OF DRAPING IT FOR NARMADA. IT IS THEN DRIED AND GIVEN IN CHARITY.
THE BANKS OF THE NARMADA ARE HOME TO EXTENSIVE FORESTS WITH A VARIETY OF LIFE FORMS. THE RIVER FLOWS THROUGH THE STATES OF MADHYA PRADESH, MAHARASHTRA AND GUJARAT AND IS A LIFELINE TO THE MANY COMMUNITIES IN THESE REGIONS.

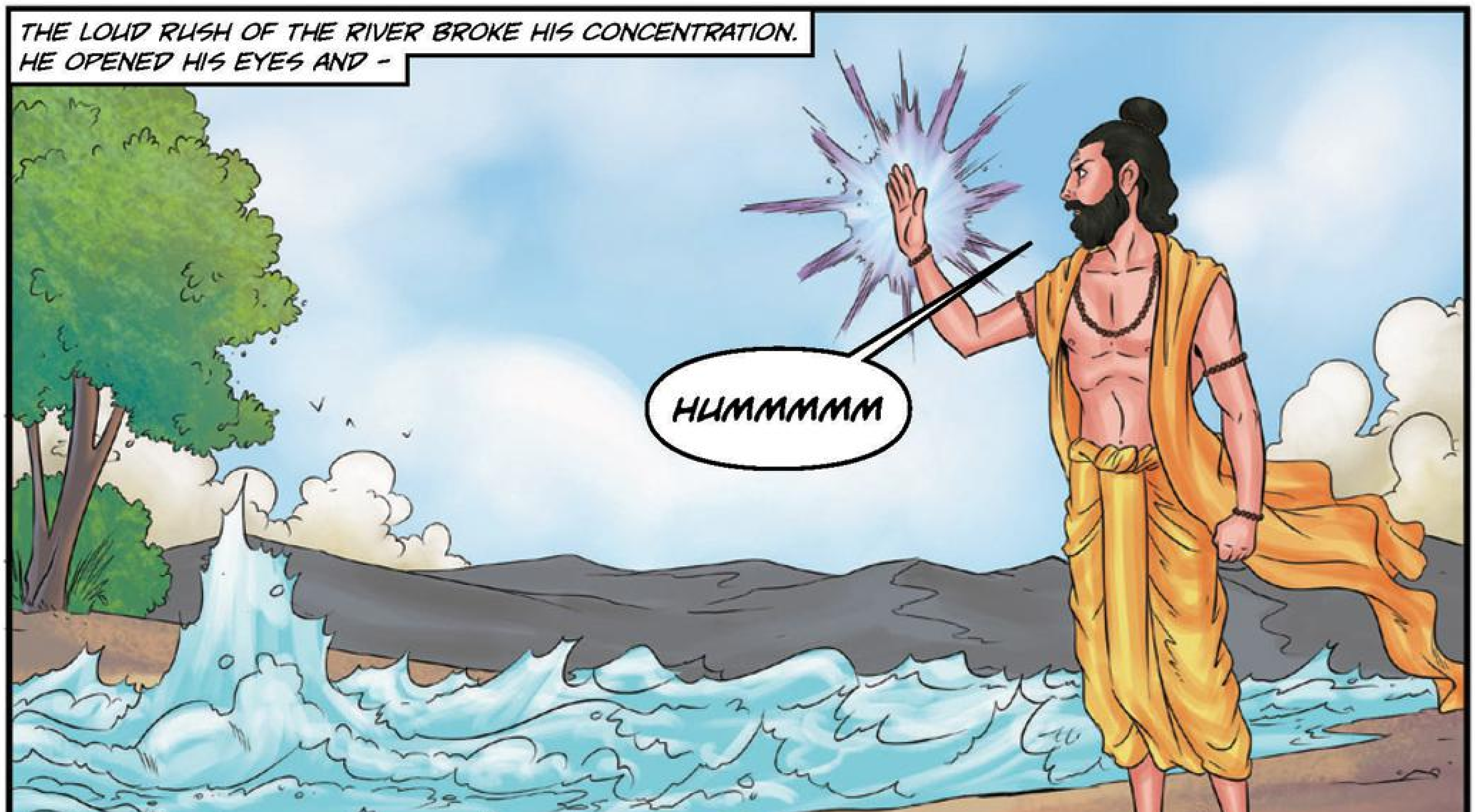

THE MALAYA MOUNTAINS, COVERED WITH LUSH, GREEN FORESTS, IS HOME TO DIVERSE BEASTS AND BIRDS. NESTLED IN THESE MOUNTAINS WAS THE HERMITAGE OF SAGE ATRI. HE LIVED THERE WITH HIS WIFE ANASUYA AND THEIR MANY DISCIPLES.

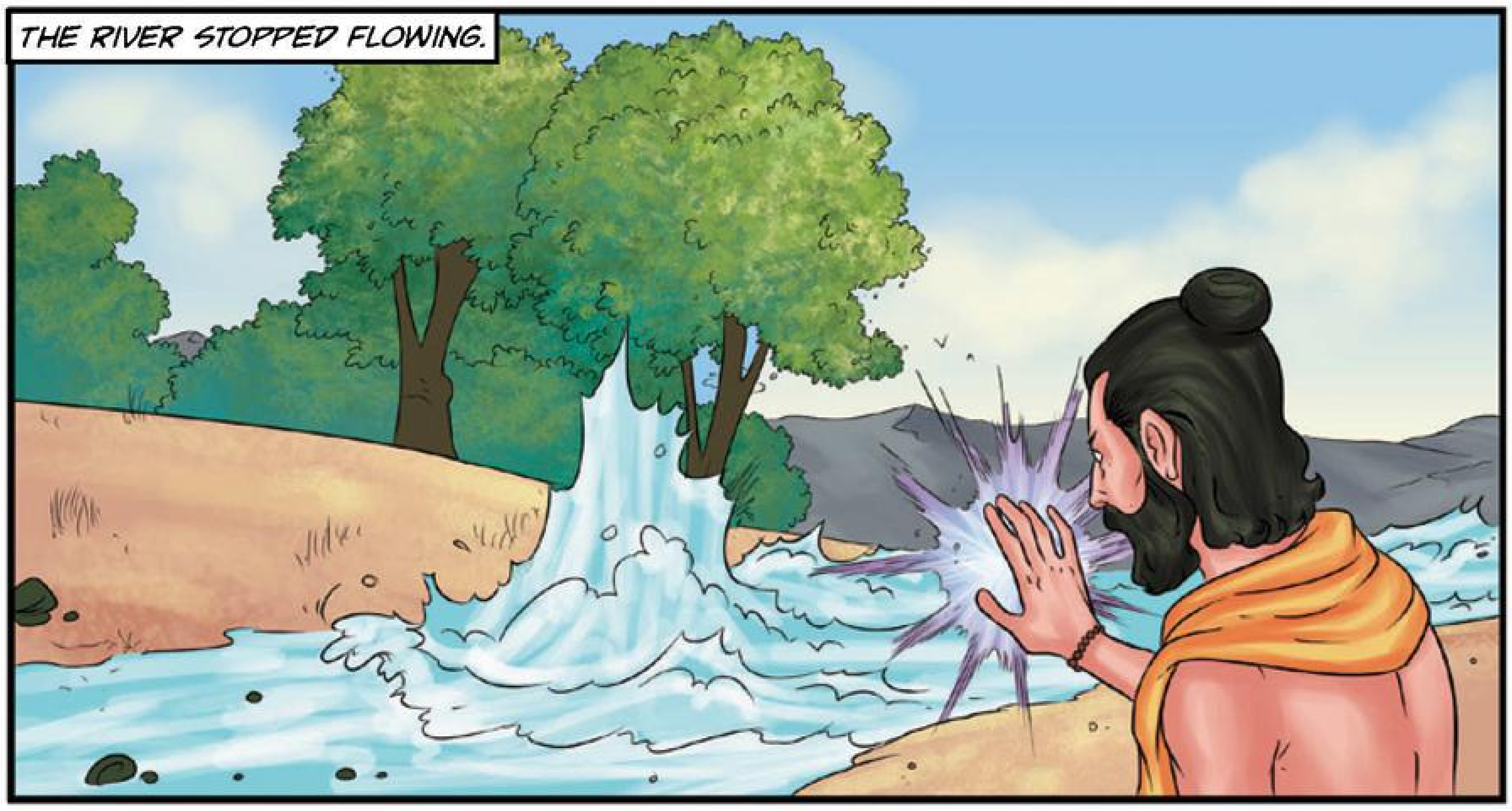

ONE DAY -
MAHARSHI, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE HOLY CITY OF KASHI AND TAKE A BATH IN THE GANGA.
HMM... HE IS NOT READY YET FOR SUCH A LONG JOURNEY.
BUT I MUST NOT DISCOURAGE HIM. I NEED TO FIND A MIDDLE PATH.
I WILL CALL FOR YOU IN A WHILE AND TELL YOU WHAT CAN BE DONE.
ATRI CHOSE AN AUSPICIOUS HOUR AND A SUITABLE PLACE IN THE HERMITAGE, THEN CALLED HIS STUDENT.
I AM READY, MAHARSHI.
BUT -
??
TAP! TAP!

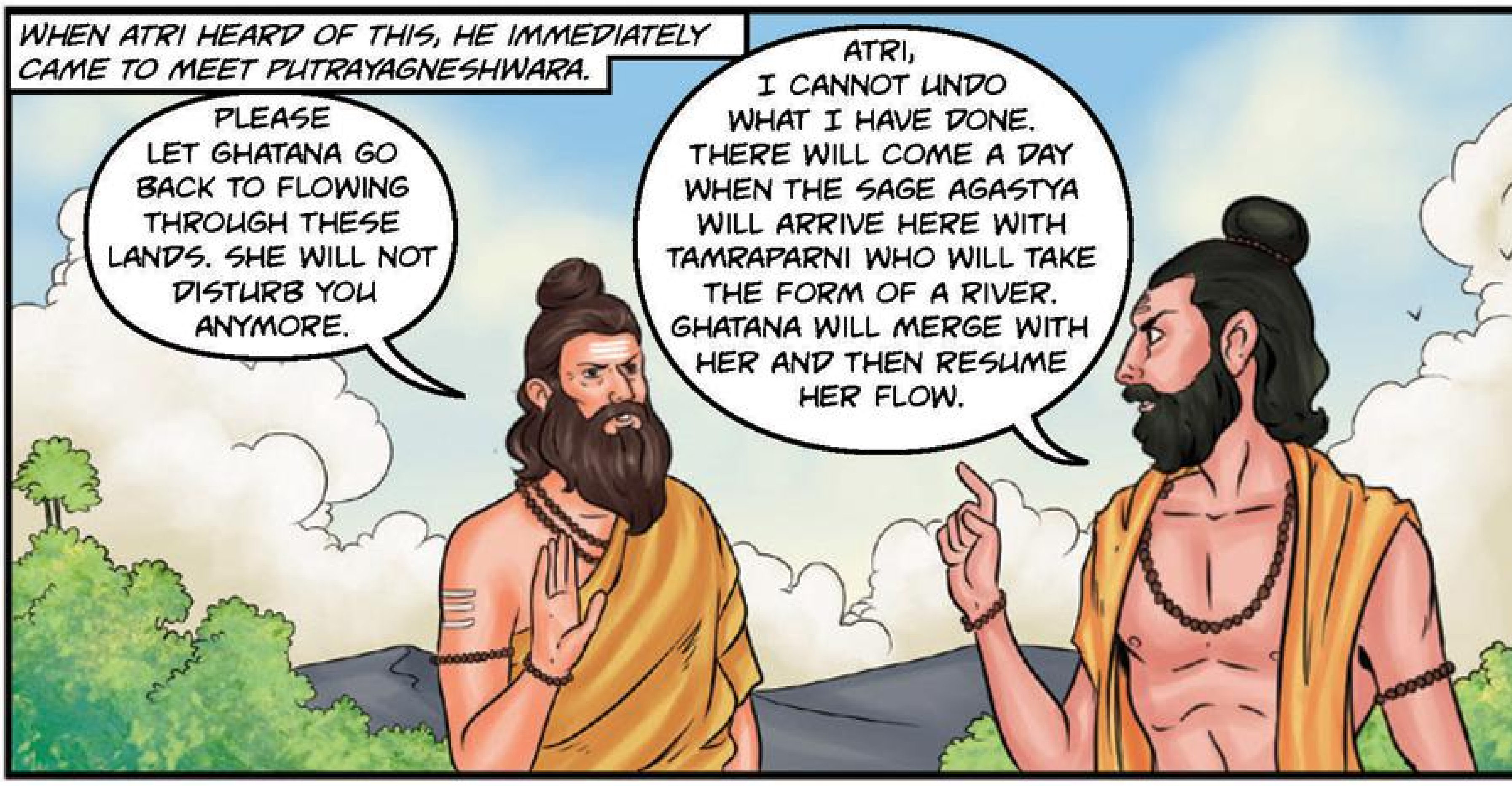

HUH!?
SPLASH
GURGLE
HERE, YOU CAN TAKE A DIP IN THIS RIVER.
BUT... IT IS NOT THE GANGA. AND WE ARE NOT IN KASHI.
SPLISH
SPLASH
YOU ARE RIGHT, SON. I INVOKED THE GANGA TO FLOW HERE AND SHE HAS ACCEPTED MY PRAYER.
THE STUDENT THANKED HIS TEACHER AND BATHED IN THE RIVER.
THIS RIVER SHALL HEREAFTER BE KNOWN AS GHATANA, THE ONE WHO HAS UNITED WITH THE GANGA.
SHE WILL ALSO BE KNOWN AS ATREYI, THE DAUGHTER OF ATRI.


GHATANA GUSHED THROUGH THE MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPE, FORMING SMALLER RIVULETS AND MIGHTY WATERFALLS.


ON THE BANKS OF GHATANA, THE SAGE PUTRAYAGNESHWARA SAT IN DEEP MEDITATION.


THE LOUD RUSH OF THE RIVER BROKE HIS CONCENTRATION. HE OPENED HIS EYES AND -
HUMMMMM

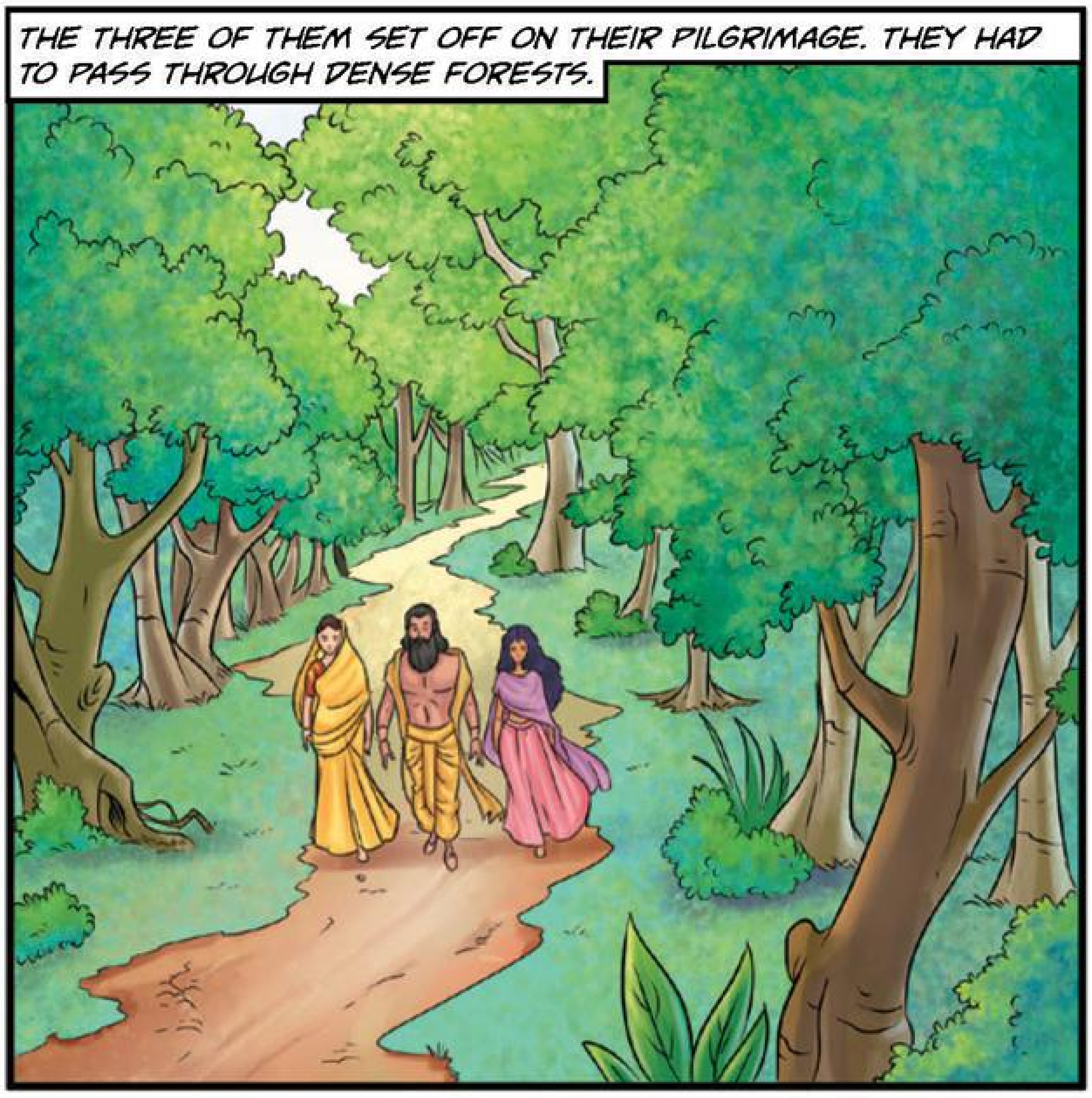

THE RIVER STOPPED FLOWING.

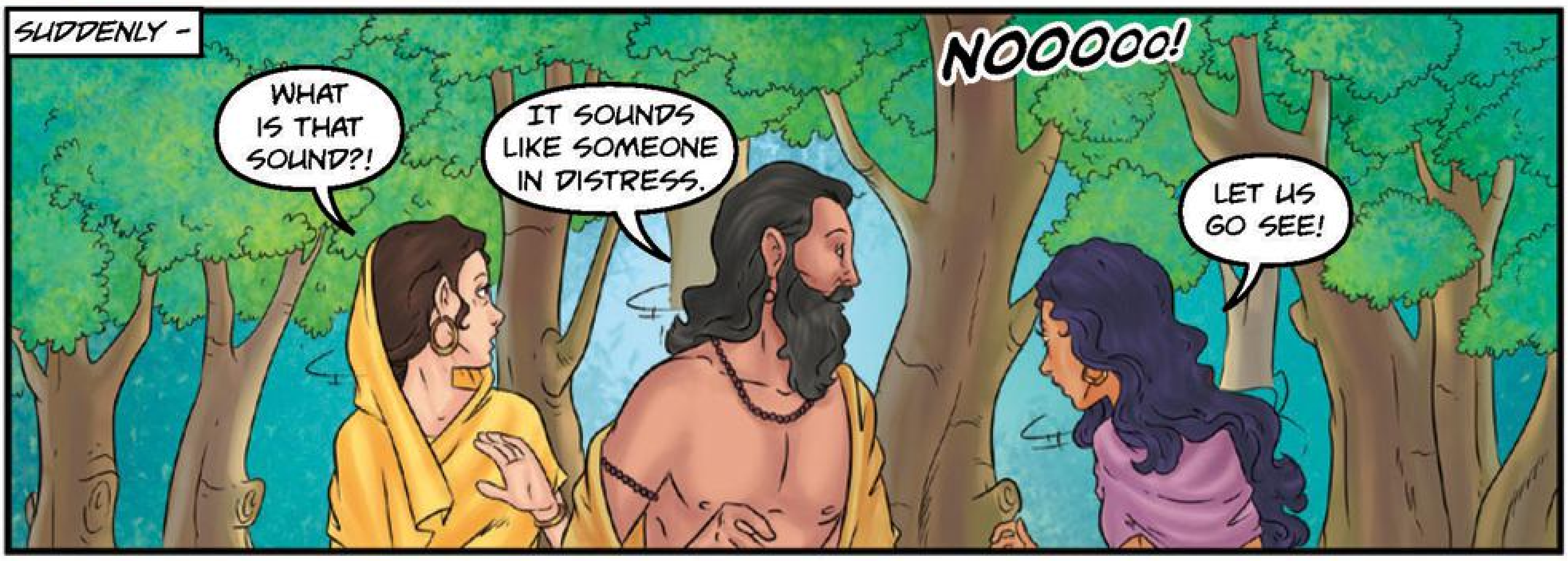

WHEN ATRI HEARD OF THIS, HE IMMEDIATELY CAME TO MEET PUTRAYAGNESHWARA.
PLEASE LET GHATANA GO BACK TO FLOWING THROUGH THESE LANDS. SHE WILL NOT DISTURB YOU ANYMORE.
ATRI, I CANNOT UNDO WHAT I HAVE DONE. THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN THE SAGE AGASTYA WILL ARRIVE HERE WITH TAMRAPARNI WHO WILL TAKE THE FORM OF A RIVER. GHATANA WILL MERGE WITH HER AND THEN RESUME HER FLOW.

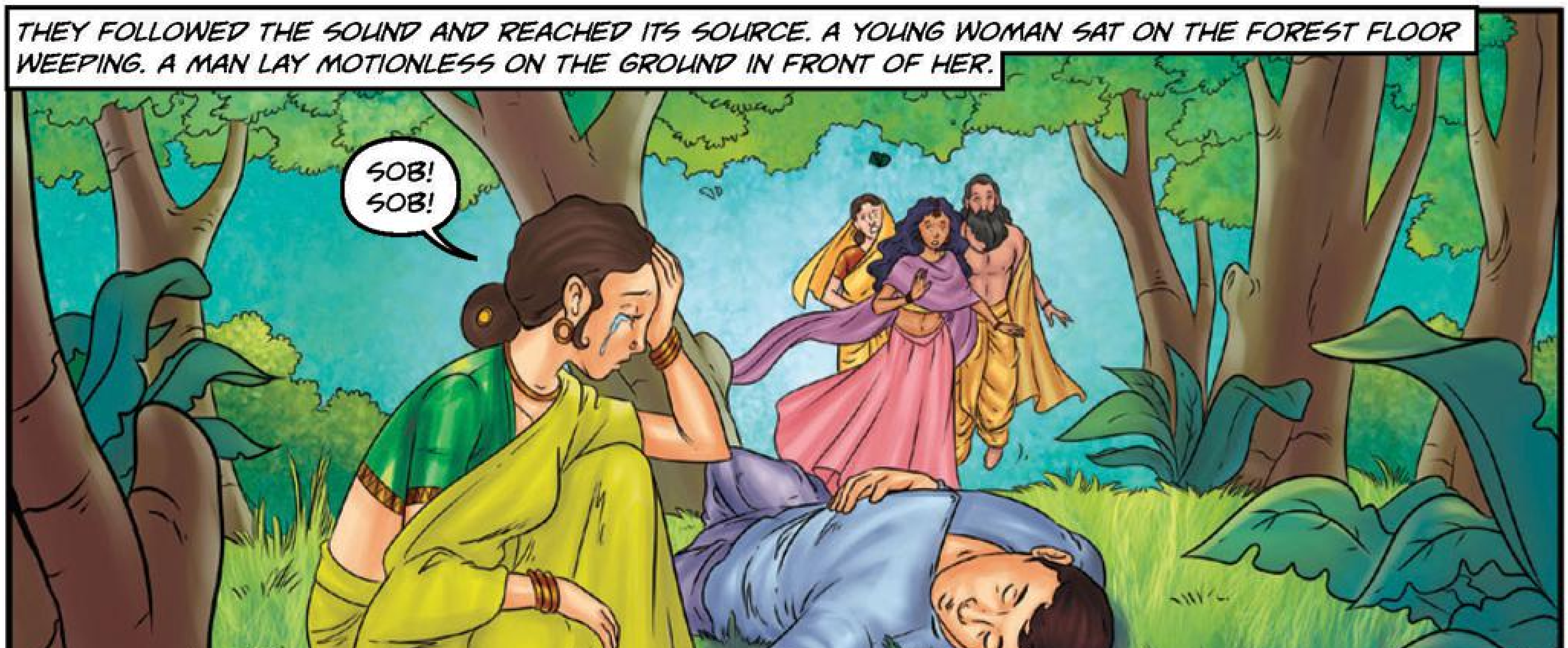
GHATANA SEEPED INTO THE GROUND AND WAITED FOR THE ORDAINED DAY.

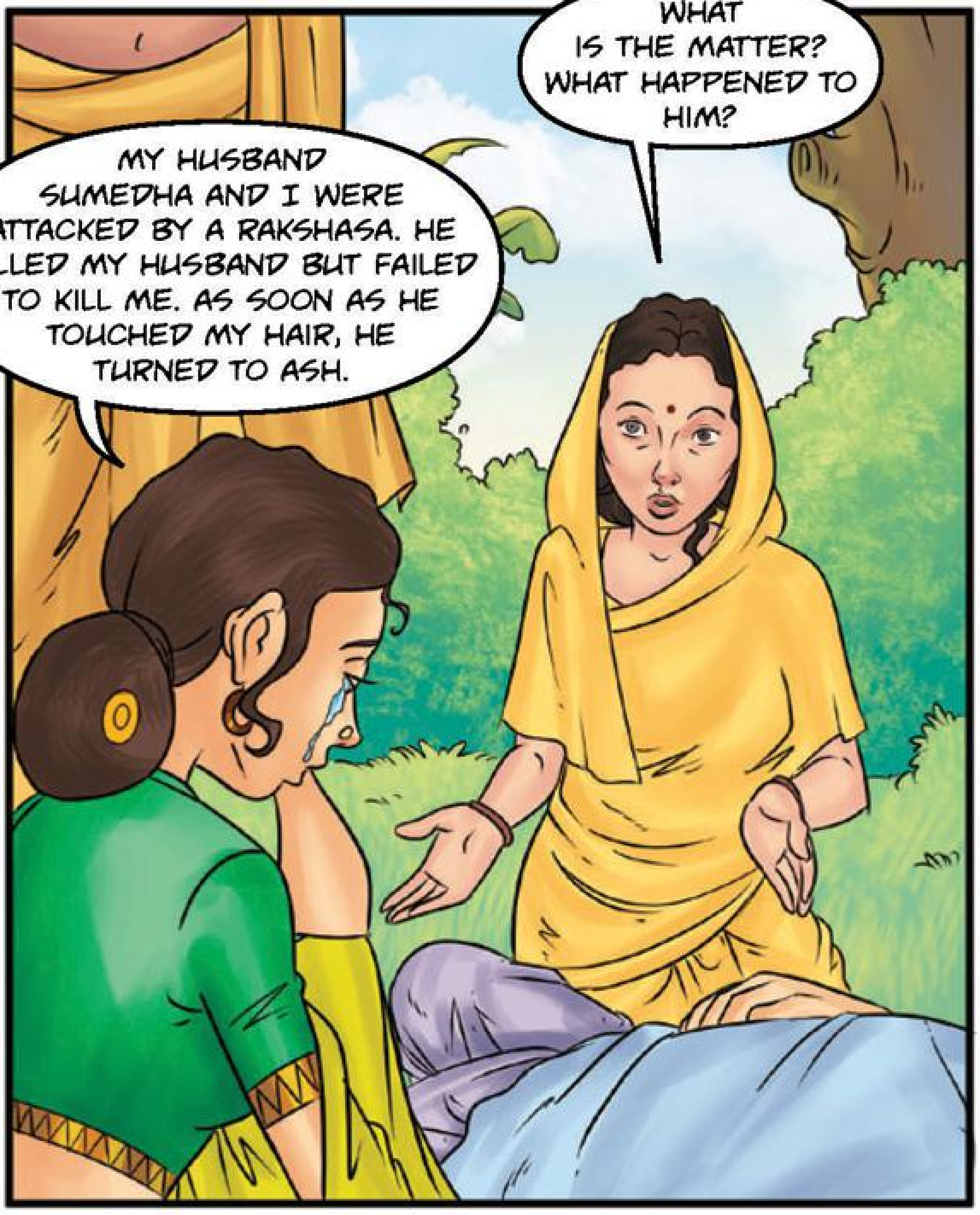
SHE WOULD OFTEN VISIT SAGE AGASTYA'S NEW HERMITAGE AND LISTEN TO HIS TEACHING...
...OR SPEND TIME AT THE SHIVA TEMPLE...
...OR EXPLORE THE MALAYA FORESTS.
TIME PASSED AND ONE DAY -
WE HAVE LIVED IN THESE BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAINS FOR SO LONG. WHY DON'T WE VISIT THE HOLY PLACES AROUND THE REGION?
A WONDERFUL IDEA! WE CAN START TOMORROW.
I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE TWO OF YOU AS WELL. MAY I?
OF COURSE, TAMRAPARNI, BUT YOU MUST TAKE YOUR FATHER'S PERMISSION.

TAMRAPARNI WENT BACK HOME AND SOUGHT HER FATHER'S PERMISSION.
IF THAT IS WHAT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY, YOU MAY DO SO, DEAR DAUGHTER.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND THE SAGE AND HIS WIFE.
THANK YOU, FATHER.


THE THREE OF THEM SET OFF ON THEIR PILGRIMAGE. THEY HAD TO PASS THROUGH DENSE FORESTS.


SUDDENLY -
NOOOOO!
WHAT IS THAT SOUND?!
IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE IN DISTRESS.
LET US GO SEE!

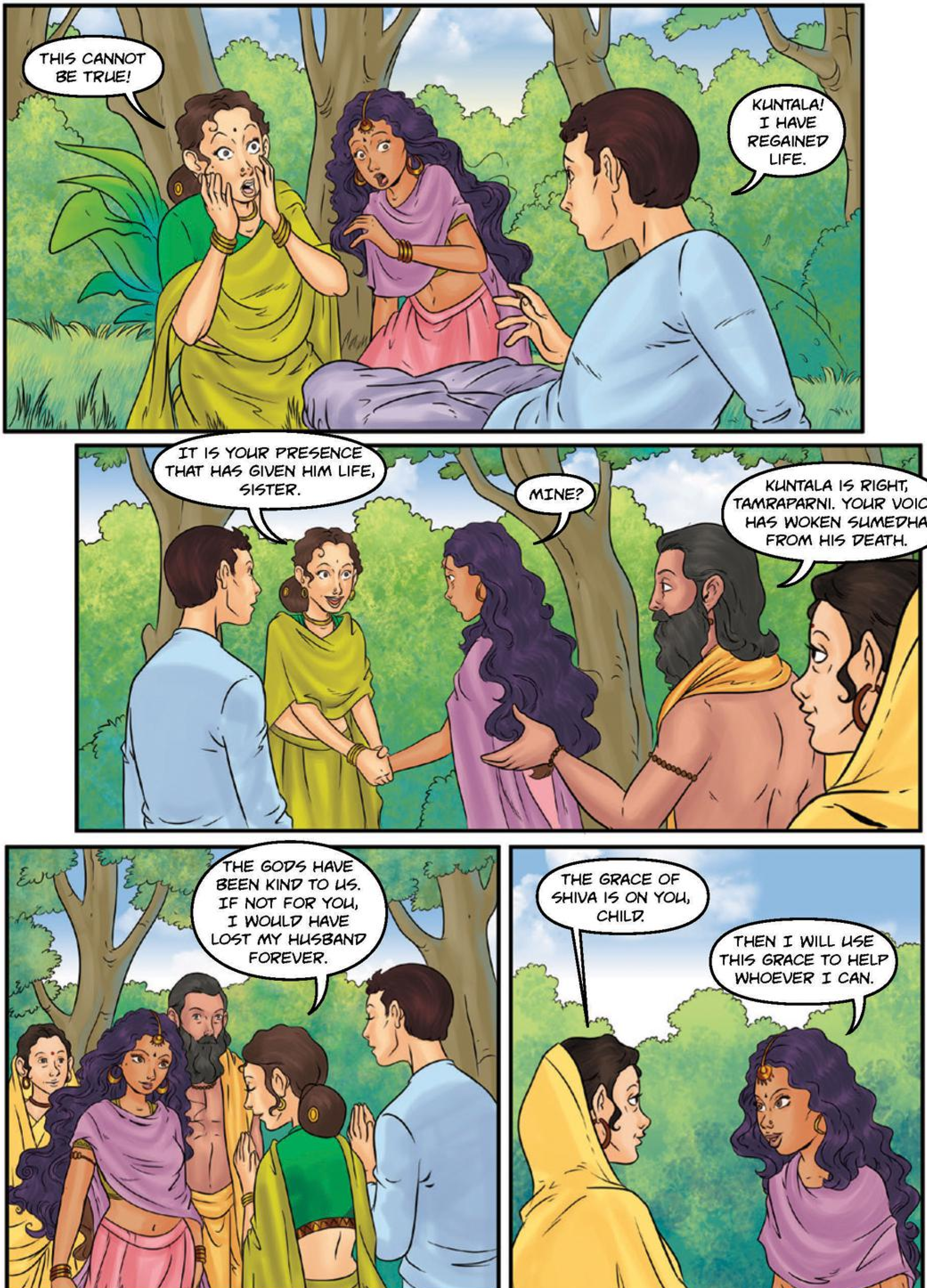

THEY FOLLOWED THE SOUND AND REACHED ITS SOURCE. A YOUNG WOMAN SAT ON THE FOREST FLOOR WEEPING. A MAN LAY MOTIONLESS ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF HER.
SOB! SOB!

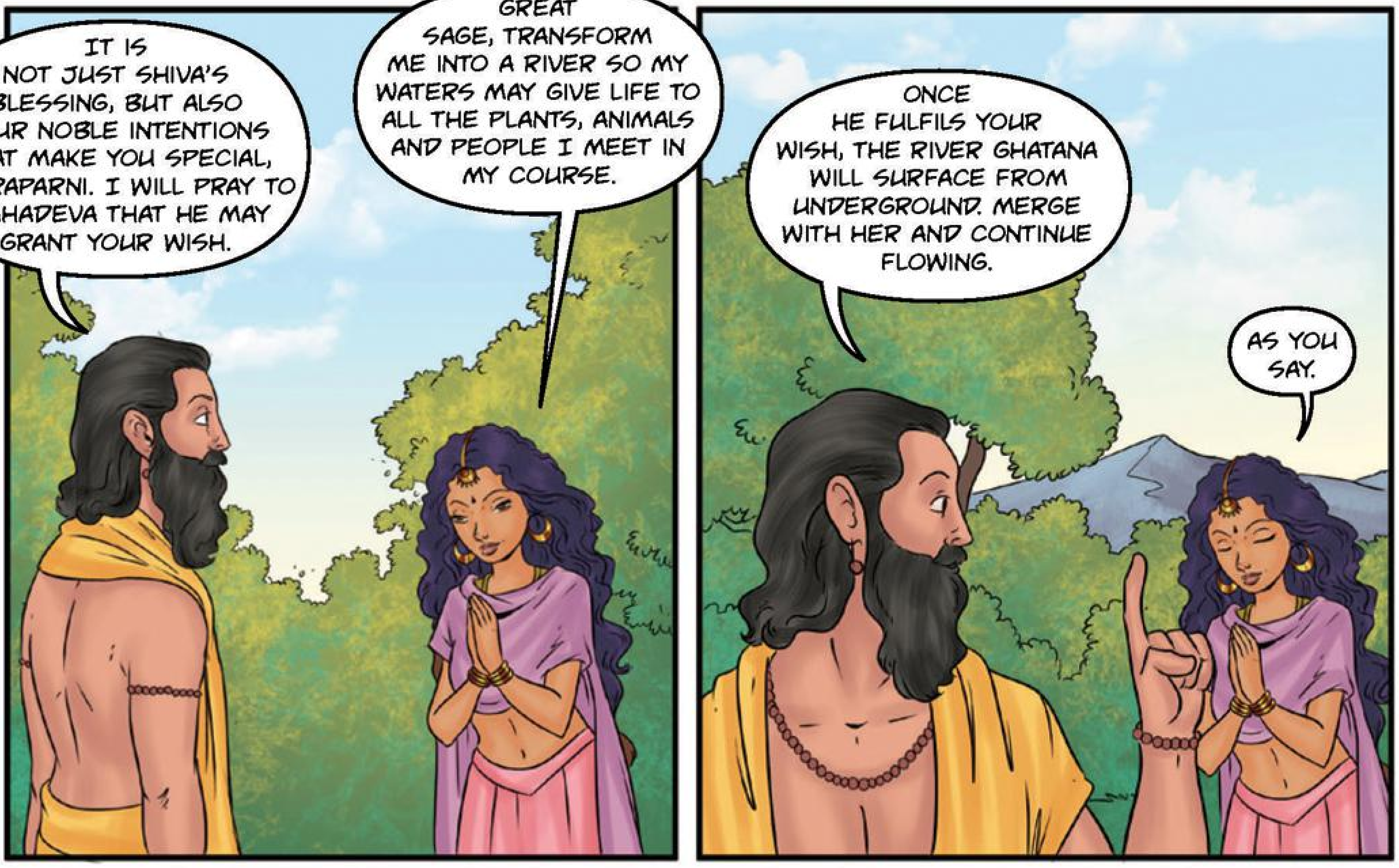

WHAT IS THE MATTER? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
MY HUSBAND SUMEDHA AND I WERE ATTACKED BY A RAKSHASA. HE KILLED MY HUSBAND BUT FAILED TO KILL ME. AS SOON AS HE TOUCHED MY HAIR, HE TURNED TO ASH.

WHO ARE YOU, YOUNG WOMAN?
I AM KUNTALA, DAUGHTER OF SAGE KASHYAPA.

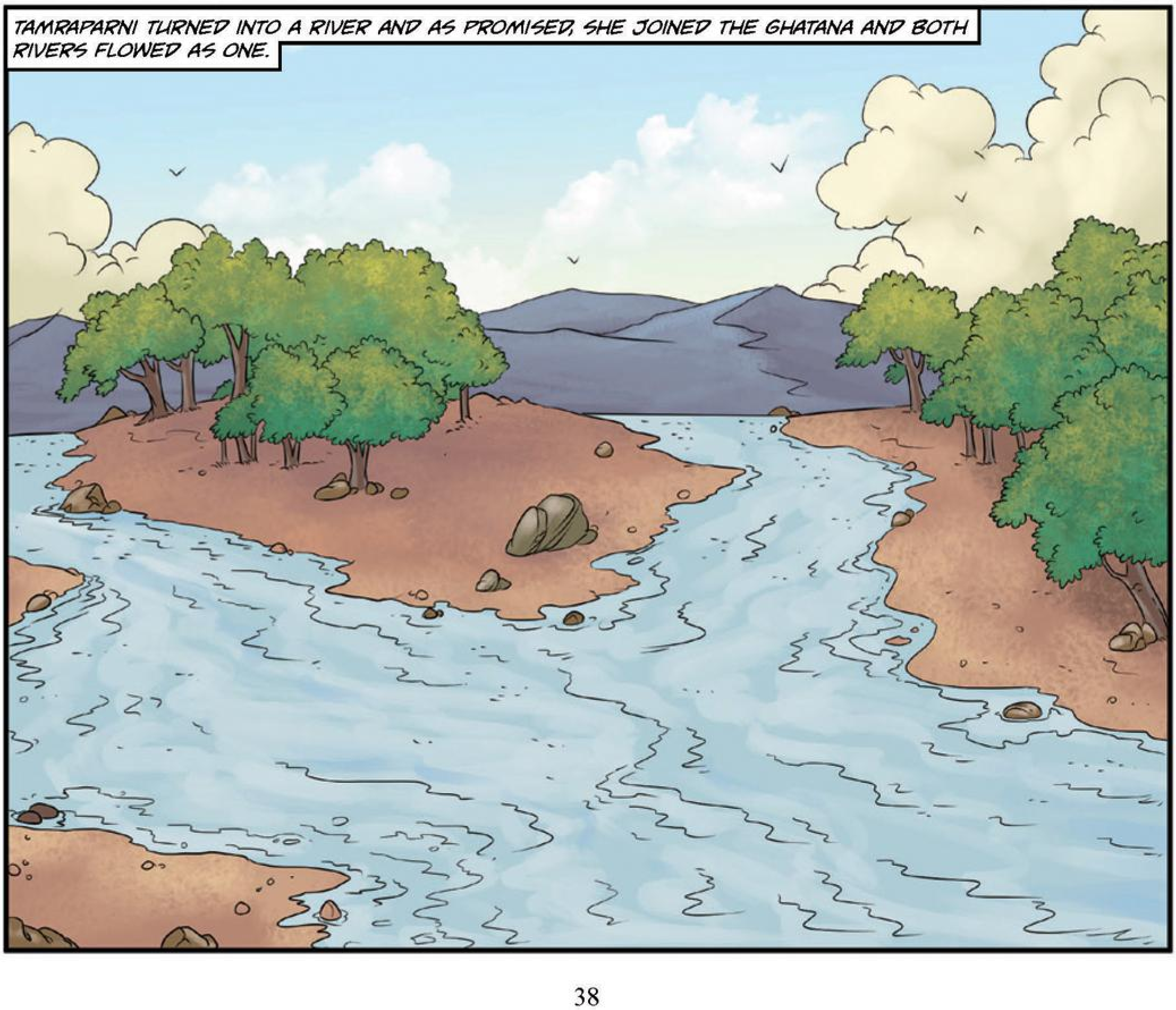
TAMRAPARNI SAT BESIDE THE INCONSOLABLE KUNTALA AND EMBRACED HER.
SOB! SOB!
IT IS INDEED A CRUEL FATE, KUNTALA. TRY TO BE STRONG.

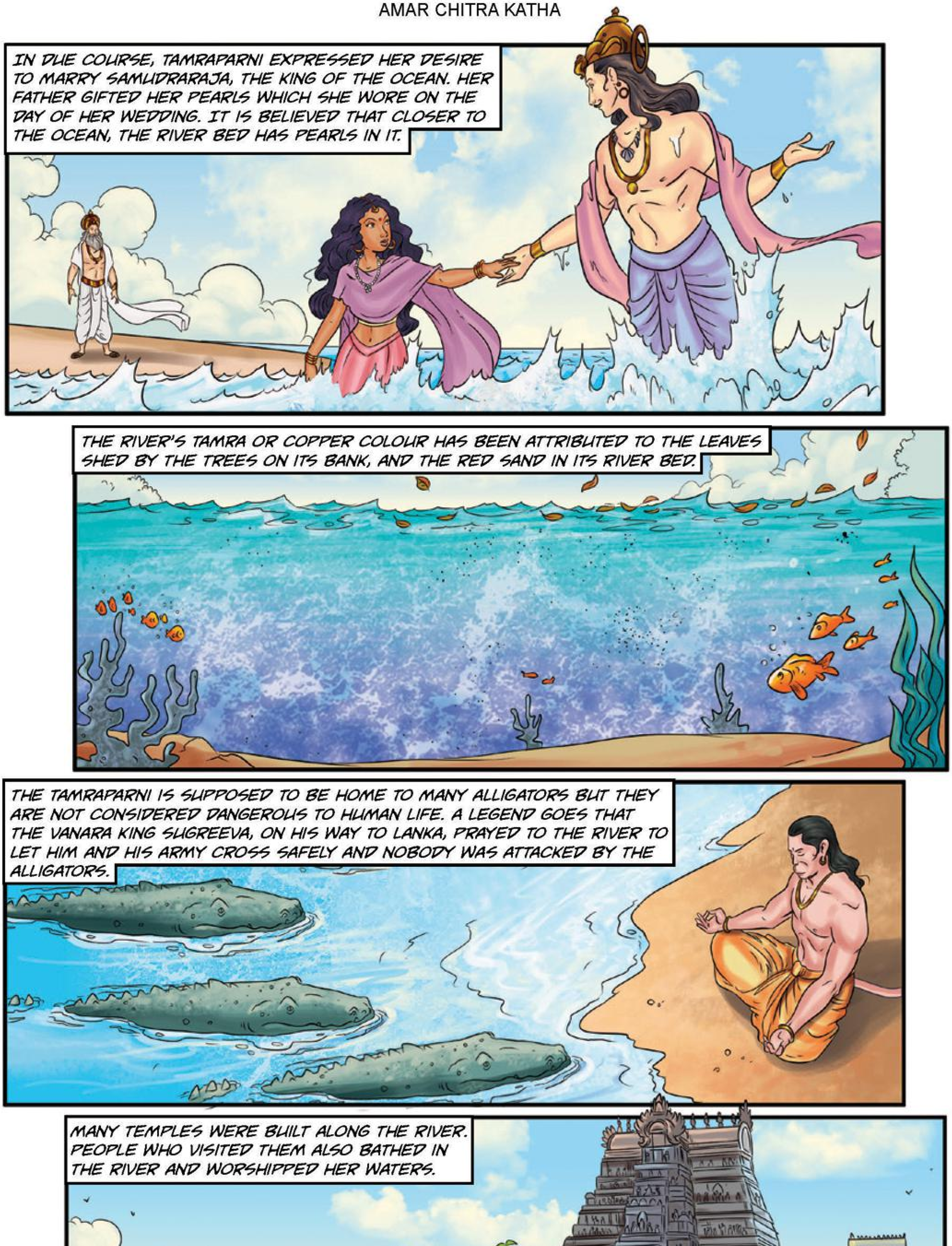
JUST THEN -
UH...


THIS CANNOT BE TRUE!
KUNTALA! I HAVE REGAINED LIFE.
IT IS YOUR PRESENCE THAT HAS GIVEN HIM LIFE, SISTER.
MINE?
KUNTALA IS RIGHT, TAMRAPARNI. YOUR VOICE HAS WOKEN SUMEDHA FROM HIS DEATH.
THE GODS HAVE BEEN KIND TO US. IF NOT FOR YOU, I WOULD HAVE LOST MY HUSBAND FOREVER.
KUNTALA AND SUMEDHA PAID THEIR RESPECTS AND LEFT.
THE GRACE OF SHIVA IS ON YOU, CHILD.
THEN I WILL USE THIS GRACE TO HELP WHOEVER I CAN.



TAMRAPARNI TURNED INTO A RIVER AND AS PROMISED, SHE JOINED THE GHATANA AND BOTH RIVERS FLOWED AS ONE.




IN DUE COURSE, TAMRAPARNI EXPRESSED HER DESIRE TO MARRY SAMUDRARAJA, THE KING OF THE OCEAN. HER FATHER GIFTED HER PEARLS WHICH SHE WORE ON THE DAY OF HER WEDDING. IT IS BELIEVED THAT CLOSER TO THE OCEAN, THE RIVER BED HAS PEARLS IN IT.
THE RIVER'S TAMRA OR COPPER COLOUR HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE LEAVES SHED BY THE TREES ON ITS BANK, AND THE RED SAND IN ITS RIVER BED.
THE TAMRAPARNI IS SUPPOSED TO BE HOME TO MANY ALLIGATORS BUT THEY ARE NOT CONSIDERED DANGEROUS TO HUMAN LIFE. A LEGEND GOES THAT THE VANARA KING SUGREEVA, ON HIS WAY TO LANKA, PRAYED TO THE RIVER TO LET HIM AND HIS ARMY CROSS SAFELY AND NOBODY WAS ATTACKED BY THE ALLIGATORS.
MANY TEMPLES WERE BUILT ALONG THE RIVER. PEOPLE WHO VISITED THEM ALSO BATHED IN THE RIVER AND WORSHIPPED HER WATERS.

THE TAMRAPARNI STOTRAM

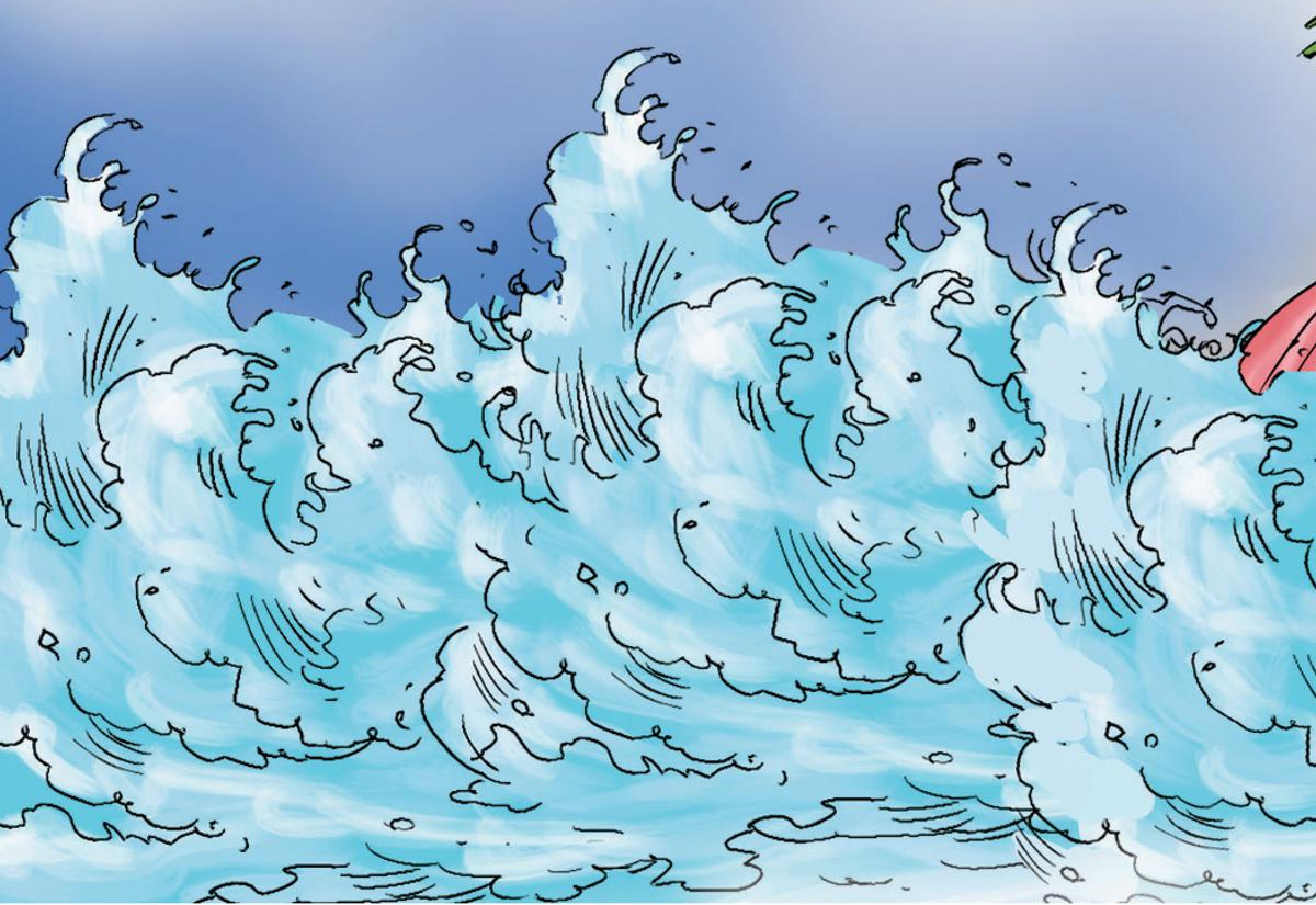
Once, in Brahmaloka, a gathering of sages assembled to recite the Sama Veda. Among them was the sage Durvasa, infamous for his short temper. As the chanting began, Durvasa sang a line out of tune. Hearing this, Saraswati laughed at him. Durvasa was furious. He was about to curse Saraswati when Brahma stopped him. "You are a sage revered in the three worlds, yet you lose your temper so easily. What is the use of all the meditation you have done?" he asked. Durvasa realized he had taken offence for a light matter. When he apologized to Brahma, Brahma advised him to go visit different holy places and pray for the strength to control his rage.

Immediately, Shiva asked Durvasa to head to the Tamraparni river. "Bathe in the river and set up a linga. I will visit you there," said Shiva. Durvasa left immediately, reached the Tamraparni and followed Shiva's instructions. Once the linga was installed, Shiva and Parvati appeared. "Durvasa, why don't you compose a prayer in praise of the beautiful Tamraparni river?" he suggested. Durvasa agreed and composed the Tamraparni Stotram. Saraswati and Tamraparni arrived at the spot and listened to the sage chant the stotram. Saraswati, pleased with it, blessed Durvasa. The gods then left for their abodes. Tamraparni thanked Durvasa and returned to the ocean.

MYTHOLOGY

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

RIVER STORIES

While their banks are dotted with temples, some rivers in India are not just places of worship, they are divinity by themselves. Some came down to earth to wash away sins and grant life, while others were created by Mahadeva himself. These rivers have continued to flow for aeons and our sacred texts have told the stories behind their origins.

Amar Chitra Katha brings to you River Stories, a collection of tales about the rivers Godavari, Narmada and Tamraparni. Rivers that continue to nourish the lands they flow through even today. The blessings of these rivers are truly life-giving to the people around them, making them goddesses in their own right.